

The HISTORY of the THE FIRST AND SECOND SAUDI STATES

ANAZD

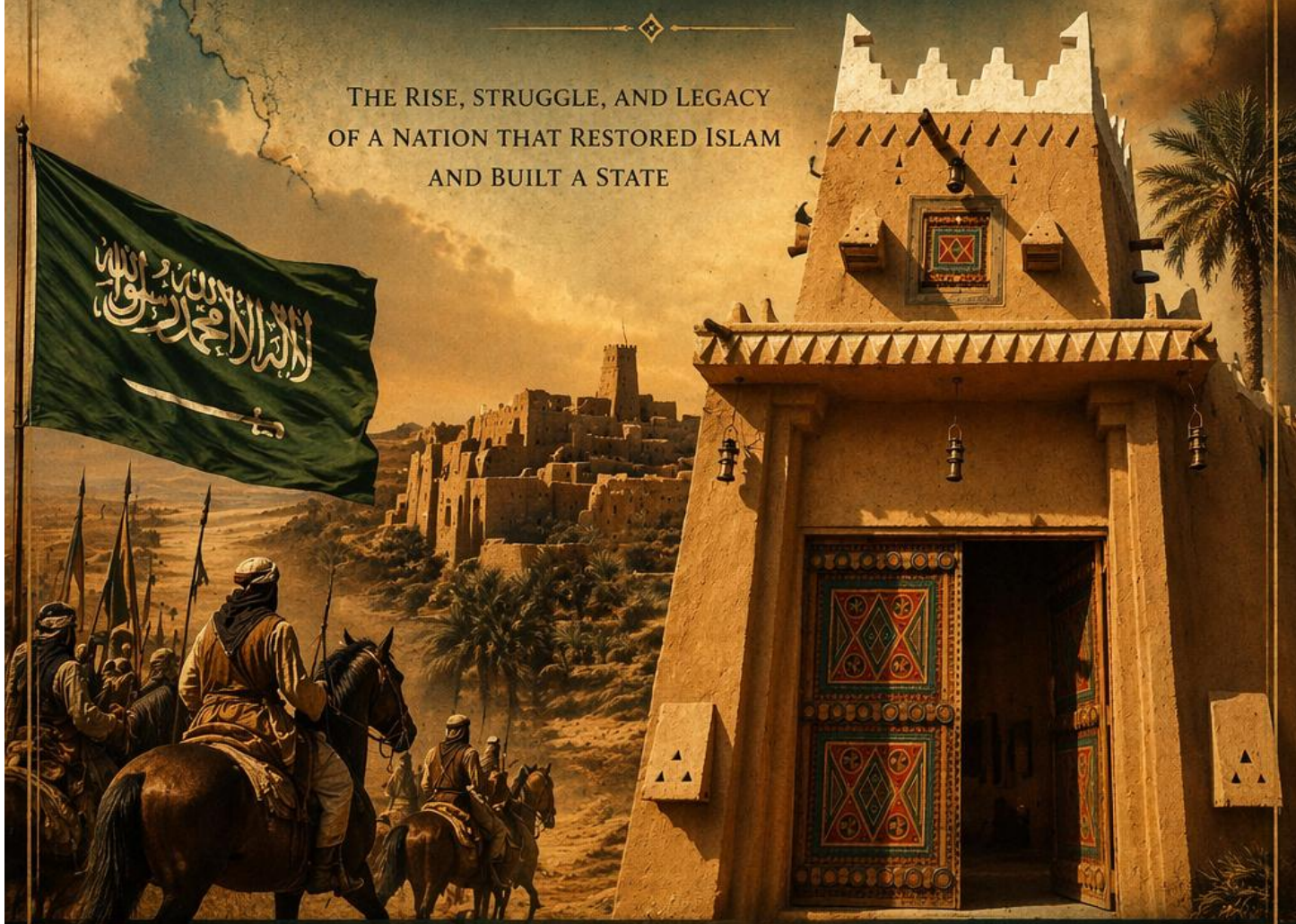
IRAQ

BASRA

HIJAZ

YEMEN

THE RISE, STRUGGLE, AND LEGACY
OF A NATION THAT RESTORED ISLAM
AND BUILT A STATE



ISLAMIC
REFORM



STATE
BUILDING



WARS AND
VICTORIES



CITIES AND
TRADE



LEGACY AND
REVIVAL

Abstract

This book examines the political, military, and social development of the First and Second Saudi States from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. Beginning with the alliance of Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in 1744, the study traces the transformation of a local Najdi polity into a regional power that challenged established authorities such as the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar dynasty

The book focuses particularly on military campaigns, including Saudi expansion into Najd, Al-Hasa, the Hijaz, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, as well as conflicts with regional powers such as Bani Khalid, Oman, and Ottoman-aligned forces. It further analyzes the strategic, ideological, and logistical factors behind Saudi military success and eventual decline.

The second half of the work explores the restoration of Saudi rule under Turki ibn Abdullah, the internal conflicts that characterized the Second Saudi State, and its eventual fall in 1891. Through a synthesis of primary and secondary sources, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced account of early Saudi state formation and regional interaction.

By Dr. Khalid Al-Azm

Introduction

The history of the Arabian Peninsula in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is often portrayed as peripheral to the major imperial narratives of the early modern and modern Middle East. However, the rise of the First Saudi State in Najd challenges this assumption, revealing the emergence of a powerful regional entity capable of reshaping political, religious, and military dynamics across Arabia and beyond.

The foundation of this state in 1744, marked by the alliance between Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Diriyah, represented more than a local political agreement. It was the beginning of a state-building project that combined religious reform with military expansion, enabling the Saudis to unify much of central Arabia and project power into neighboring regions.

Over the following decades, the Saudi state expanded into Al-Hasa, the Persian Gulf, and the Hijaz, gaining control over key المدن and trade routes. Their campaigns extended as far as southern Iraq, where clashes with Ottoman forces and their allies became increasingly frequent. These developments culminated in a prolonged confrontation with the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately led to the destruction of Diriyah in 1818 following the campaign of Ibrahim Pasha.

Yet the fall of the First Saudi State did not mark the end of Saudi political authority. Within a few years, a new Saudi polity emerged in Riyadh under Turki ibn Abdullah. The Second Saudi State, while less expansive, played a crucial role in preserving the political legacy of Diriyah. It was, however, marked by internal divisions, succession disputes, and increasing pressure from rival powers such as the Emirate of Jabal Shammar.

This book seeks to move beyond simplified narratives of rise and fall by examining the Saudi states as dynamic political and military systems. It emphasizes campaigns, leadership decisions, regional rivalries, and the interaction between ideology and warfare. By doing so, it aims to place the Saudi experience within the broader context of Middle Eastern history

Final Table of Contents

The Foundations of Saudi Power (Pre-1744 – 1774)

Beginnings of Saudi History

1. The Diriyah Pact (1744)
2. The Conquest of Riyadh
3. The Saudi–Bani Khalid Conflict and the Consolidation of the First Saudi State (1764–1774)
4. Saudi conquest of Al hasa
5. The Saudi Conquest of Qatif and Tarout

Military Structure and Early Campaigns

The Military of the First Saudi State

6. Weapons of the First Saudi State
7. Iraqi Campaign Against Tanuma (1786)
8. The Kuwait Expedition (1793 CE)
9. Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad's Entry into Ottoman Iraq (1788)

Expansion in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf (1793–1808)

9. The Fall of Qatar and Al-Zubarah (1793–1799)
10. The Kuwaiti–Saudi Conflict and the Northern Gulf Frontier (1793–1808)
11. The Saudi Invasion of Bahrain (1801)
12. Saudi Expansion into the Persian Gulf (1805)

The Iraqi Front and Ottoman Conflict (1788–1811)

13. Thuwaini bin Abdullah campaigns
14. The Campaign of Ali Al-Kahiya and the Six-Year Truce (1798)
15. Saudi Raids in Ottoman Iraq (1799–1811)

The Hijaz and Southern Expansion

15. The Saudi Conquest of the Hijaz
16. The Advance into Asir and Yemen
17. Corancez Mission of 1803

Oman, the Gulf, and International Intervention (1800–1816)

17. The Saudi Invasion of Oman (1800–1813)
18. The British Campaign Against Ras Al Khaimah (1809)
19. Conflict with Persia (1808–1816)
20. The British Campaign Against Ras Al Khaimah (1816)

Governance and Economy of the First Saudi State

21. The System of Government of the Saudis
22. Trade of the First Saudi State
23. Currency of the First Saudi state

The Ottoman–Saudi War and the Fall of Diriyah (1811–1818)

23. The Ottoman–Saudi War (1811–1818)
24. The Decline of the Saudis
25. The Fall of Diriyah (1818)
26. British Expedition Against the Qawasim

Collapse and Restoration (1818–1824)

26. Rebuilding the Saudi State (1818–1821)
27. The Rebellion and Restoration (1821–1824)

The Second Saudi State: Expansion and Conflict (1824–1865)

28. The System of Government in the Second Saudi State
29. The Saudi Conquest of Al-Hasa (1830)
30. Egyptian–Wahhabi Border Clashes (1833–1836)
31. The Egyptian Expedition to Najd (1836–1843)
32. Conflict in Wadi Al-Dawasir (1845)
33. The Ajman Tribe Problem
34. Faisal bin Turki and the Bahrain Conflict (1847–1851)
35. Faisal ibn Turki's Campaign Against Oman (1851–1853)
36. The First War of Unaizah (1854)

37. **Civil War and Decline (1861–1891)**

- 37. The Second War of Unaizah (1861–1862)
- 38. Raids on Abu Dhabi (1850s–1860s)
- 39. The Saudi Civil War (1865–1875)
- 40. Ottoman Invasion of Al-Hasa (1871)
- 41. The Fall of the Second Saudi State (1891)

Persona: Dr. Al-Azm is a distinguished academic of Yemeni and Saudi heritage, with a career split between leading universities in Riyadh and London. He is known for blending rigorous, traditional archival research with an understanding of oral histories and regional geography. His writing style is accessible yet deeply authoritative, focusing not just on military history, but on the intellectual and social currents that defined the formative Saudi periods

The Foundations of Saudi Power (Pre-1744 – 1774)

In the early eighteenth century, the Arabian Peninsula stood far from the centers of imperial authority. While great empires such as the Ottoman Empire and the remnants of the Safavid dynasty projected influence along the coasts and frontier regions, the vast interior of Arabia remained largely beyond their effective control. Nowhere was this more evident than in the region of Najd, a land defined by its harsh environment, scattered settlements, and deeply rooted tribal traditions. Najd in this period was not a unified political entity, but rather a mosaic of small towns, oasis communities, and tribal domains. Each settlement functioned with a high degree of independence, governed by local leaders whose authority rarely extended beyond their immediate surroundings. Alliances were temporary, conflicts frequent, and stability fragile. In the absence of a central السلطة, power was determined as much by negotiation and kinship as by force.

The Beginnings of Saudi History

The origins of Diriyah can be traced back to the mid-fifteenth century, when Mani' bin Rabi'a al-Muraidi migrated with his kin from a settlement bearing the same name near Al-Qatif. This movement was not unusual in the context of Arabian society, where tribal groups frequently relocated in search of more secure and fertile lands. Upon arriving in the region of Wadi Hanifa, Mani' settled in the areas of Ghusaybah and al-Mulaybid, both of which offered relatively favorable conditions for agriculture and habitation in an otherwise harsh environment.

In a gesture that reflected both continuity and identity, Mani' named the new settlement "Diriyah," preserving the memory of his ancestral home. What began as a modest migration would, in time, lay the foundations for one of the most consequential political entities in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. Diriyah's location along Wadi Hanifa provided not only sustenance but also a strategic position within the network of inland routes that connected various parts of Najd.

Following the death of Mani' bin Rabi'a, leadership passed to his son, Rabi'a bin Mani'. Under his authority, Diriyah began to grow both in population and local importance. The settlement gradually attracted neighboring groups, including families such as the Al-Yazid, who abandoned their own villages and integrated into the expanding community. This process of gradual consolidation was characteristic of political development in Najd, where stability and protection often drew smaller groups toward stronger settlements.

Over successive generations, authority in Diriyah remained within the ruling lineage of Al-Muraidi. Leadership passed through a سلسلة of rulers, including Ibrahim bin Musa, Markhan bin Ibrahim, and later the joint leadership of Rabi'a and Muqrin, the sons of Markhan. This continuity of

governance, though not without internal challenges, allowed Diriyah to maintain a degree of cohesion that was uncommon in the fragmented political landscape of Najd.

As the emirate evolved, power circulated among prominent members of the extended family. Figures such as Watban bin Rabi'a, Markhan bin Muqrin, Nasser bin Muhammad bin Watban, Muhammad bin Muqrin, Ibrahim bin Watban, and Idris bin Watban each played roles in sustaining the political structure of Diriyah across generations. While the historical record of this period is often limited in detail, it nevertheless reveals a pattern of hereditary leadership combined with local alliances and rivalries.

By the early eighteenth century, Diriyah had emerged as a stable and locally influential emirate. In 1121 AH (1709 CE), authority rested with Musa bin Rabi'a bin Watban, after whom leadership passed to Saud al-Awwal bin Muhammad bin Muqrin. Saud's rule, which lasted until 1137 AH (1726 CE), represented a مرحلة of continuity rather than transformation, preserving the position of Diriyah within the broader Najdi environment.

Following Saud's death, leadership briefly passed to Zaid bin Markhan bin Watban, an elder of the ruling family. His rule, however, was short-lived, ending with his death in 1139 AH (1726 CE). This moment marked a turning point, as it paved the way for the accession of Muhammad ibn Saud. His rise to power would prove decisive, not only for Diriyah but for the entire region of Najd.

Muhammad bin Saud inherited a settlement that was stable but not yet dominant. Through his leadership, Diriyah began to transition from a local emirate into the nucleus of a broader political مشروع. His authority, grounded in both lineage and local legitimacy, would soon be reinforced by an alliance that transformed the trajectory of Arabian history.

A pivotal turning point came in 1744, when Muhammad bin Saud entered into a historic agreement with the reformist scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. This alliance, concluded in Diriyah, brought together political

leadership and a powerful religious reform movement. At its core, the agreement sought to revive what its proponents viewed as the authentic teachings of early Islam, while opposing practices they regarded as innovations or deviations.

The pact rested on two fundamental principles. First, a shared commitment to religious reform grounded in the teachings of the early Islamic generations. Second, a mutual obligation to support and defend one another politically, militarily, and socially in the spread of this reformist message. In effect, it fused الدعوة with الدولة, creating a unified مشروع that combined ideology with power.

Diriyah Pact

The Diriyah Pact did not merely strengthen the position of Diriyah; it redefined it. What had once been a local settlement now became the مركز of an expanding movement. From Diriyah, the reformist call spread rapidly across Najd, reaching into Al-Hasa, the Hejaz, parts of Oman, and even beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

In the years that followed, this alliance would serve as the ideological and institutional foundation of the First Saudi State. It marked the beginning of a new phase in Arabian history one in which political authority, religious reform, and military expansion became deeply interconnected. From this point forward, the story of Diriyah was no longer that of a small Najdi settlement, but of a rising power whose influence would reshape the region.

The Conquest of Riyadh

In the decades following the alliance forged in Diriyah, the emerging Saudi polity began to expand steadily across the region of Najd. This expansion was not initially driven solely by force; rather, it often proceeded through a combination of alliances, persuasion, and the growing influence of the

reformist movement. Settlements such as al-‘Uyaynah, Manfuha, and Huraymila were among the first to align themselves with Diriyah, followed in time by towns like Dhurma and Shaqra. These developments reflected the increasing *قدرة* of Diriyah to project both political and religious authority across central Arabia.

Among the most significant neighboring settlements was Riyadh, ruled at the time by Daham bin Dawwas. Relations between Riyadh and Diriyah had long been cordial, and in the early stages of Saudi expansion, Daham maintained a position of cautious cooperation with Muhammad ibn Saud. However, this relationship began to deteriorate following the arrival of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Diriyah and the rapid spread of the reformist *الدعوة*.

As Diriyah’s influence expanded, Daham bin Dawwas grew increasingly wary of the shifting balance of power. What had once been a neighboring polity of limited ambition now appeared as a rising force capable of unifying Najd under a new ideological and political framework. In response, Daham adopted a more hostile stance. He began to suppress supporters of the reformist movement within Riyadh and launched attacks against nearby settlements that had allied themselves with Diriyah, including Manfuha. These actions marked the beginning of a prolonged and bitter conflict between the two *القوى*.

Under the leadership of Muhammad bin Saud, and later his son Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud, the Saudi state engaged in a sustained struggle against Daham bin Dawwas. This conflict extended over nearly three decades, during which approximately thirty-five military engagements took place between the two sides. The fighting was marked by cycles of advance and retreat, raids, sieges, and shifting *السيطرة* over surrounding *المناطق*. The human cost was considerable, with estimates suggesting that around four thousand individuals lost their lives over the course of the conflict.

Despite the *طول* of the struggle, the balance gradually shifted in favor of Diriyah. The growing cohesion of Saudi forces, combined with the

expanding network of allied settlements, placed increasing pressure on Riyadh. The decisive moment came in 1773, following the event known as *Hudaym al-Marqab*. In the aftermath of this confrontation, Daham bin Dawwas abandoned Riyadh and fled, bringing an end to his long resistance.

With the departure of Daham, Saudi forces under Imam Abdulaziz entered Riyadh, securing control over one of the most strategically important settlements in Najd. Administration of the city was entrusted to Prince Abdullah bin Muqrin bin Muhammad bin Muqrin, ensuring its integration into the expanding Saudi state. The capture of Riyadh marked a turning point in the early history of the First Saudi State, transforming it from a regional power centered in Diriyah into a dominant force across central Arabia.

At the same time, efforts to consolidate authority extended beyond Riyadh itself. Muhammad bin Saud and his successors moved to secure surrounding regions, confronting rival tribes and reinforcing alliances. Among these conflicts were engagements with the Ajman tribe, including a notable battle in which approximately fifty Ajman tribesmen were killed, prompting the survivors to retreat southward toward Najran, a center of the Yam tribes.

The broader period between 1764 and 1774 (1178–1188 AH) represented a decisive and often turbulent phase in the formation of the Saudi state. The growing influence of the Saudi–Wahhabi alliance inevitably provoked resistance from established regional powers. Foremost among these were the Bani Khalid, who controlled Al-Hasa, and the Yam tribes of Najran, both of whom viewed the rise of Diriyah as a direct challenge to their authority.

In this context, the conquest of Riyadh was not an isolated event, but part of a broader process of state formation defined by conflict, consolidation, and expansion. It demonstrated the *قدرة* of the Saudi leadership to overcome sustained resistance and to integrate key centers of power into a unified political structure. From this point forward, the Saudi state

would continue its expansion beyond Najd, carrying its influence into eastern Arabia, the Gulf, and eventually the Hijaz

Consolidation of the Saudi state and its war with Bani Khalid Saudi conquest into Al hasa

The decade between 1764 and 1774 (1178–1188 AH) marked one of the most critical and turbulent phases in the early history of the First Saudi State. During this period, the emerging polity centered in Diriyah faced a series of existential challenges from powerful regional rivals determined to halt its expansion. At the heart of this struggle stood the rising Saudi–Wahhabi alliance under Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whose growing influence in Najd provoked widespread resistance.

Foremost among their adversaries was the powerful Bani Khalid confederation, which dominated the rich eastern region of Al-Hasa under the leadership of Arayʿar bin Dujayn. Alongside them stood the Yam tribes of Najran, led by the formidable Hassan bin Hibatullah Al-Makrami. These forces, though geographically separated, shared a common objective: to contain and, if possible, destroy the rising Saudi state.

The origins of the conflict can be traced to what initially appeared to be a localized tribal dispute. In 1177 AH (1763 CE), while returning to Diriyah, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad received news that the Ajman tribe had attacked a group belonging to the Subaiʿ tribe near Sudair. Acting swiftly, he pursued the Ajman to the region of Qadhlah. This pursuit, however, triggered a broader chain of events. Facing pressure, the Ajman sought assistance from Najran, appealing to the Yam tribes and their leader, Al-Makrami.

Recognizing the growing threat posed by Diriyah, Al-Makrami began preparing for a large-scale military intervention. At the same time, he forged a crucial alliance with Arayʿar bin Dujayn of Bani Khalid. This alliance was further strengthened by the participation of Daham bin Dawwas, the ruler of Riyadh, who had already entered into prolonged

conflict with the Saudis. The coalition agreed to unite their forces at al-Ha'ir, south of Riyadh, with the clear objective of launching a decisive strike against Diriyah.

The first major confrontation came in 1178 AH (1764 CE) at the Battle of al-Ha'ir. In this engagement, the allied forces dealt a significant defeat to the army of Diriyah. Contemporary historians, including al-Othaimeen, have regarded this battle as a pivotal moment, as it exposed the vulnerability of the Saudi state at a time when it was still consolidating its power. Despite the setback, the aftermath did not lead to immediate collapse. A temporary settlement was reached, involving the exchange of prisoners, after which the Najran forces withdrew from the theater of operations.

Yet the withdrawal of the Yam contingent did not end the conflict. Aray'ar bin Dujayn, determined to capitalize on his advantage, launched a major offensive shortly thereafter. In 1178 AH (1765 CE), he assembled a large coalition that once again included Najran forces, Daham bin Dawwas of Riyadh, and several Najdi rulers opposed to Saudi expansion. This combined army advanced directly toward Diriyah, placing the nascent state in one of the most dangerous situations of its early existence.

Faced with this threat, the leadership of Diriyah demonstrated a pragmatic blend of diplomacy and resistance. Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab succeeded in negotiating a temporary understanding with certain factions within the Bani Khalid, effectively weakening the cohesion of the enemy alliance. Nevertheless, Aray'ar's main force continued its advance and laid siege to Diriyah.

The siege lasted for approximately one month and represented a moment of existential crisis for the Saudi state. Surrounded by hostile forces and facing the احتمال of total defeat, Diriyah stood on the brink of collapse. Yet, in a decisive turn, Aray'ar was unable to sustain the siege. Whether due to logistical constraints, internal divisions, or strategic miscalculations, he ultimately lifted the siege and withdrew. This failure to deliver a decisive blow proved to be a turning point, allowing Diriyah to survive and regroup.

In the years that followed, the conflict evolved into a سلسلة of shifting alliances and regional confrontations. One of the most notable figures during this phase was Zaid bin Zamil, the emir of al-Dilam, a strategically important settlement south of Riyadh. Initially attempting to navigate the changing political landscape, Zaid eventually aligned himself with Najran and the Yam tribes in an effort to resist Saudi expansion.

This alignment led to the Second Battle of al-Ha'ir, in which Saudi forces confronted the combined armies of Najran and al-Dilam. Unlike the earlier engagement, this battle ended in a decisive Saudi victory. The outcome not only reinforced Saudi military strength but also secured southern Najd, effectively cutting off a key route through which external forces could threaten Diriyah.

Following this victory, Zaid bin Zamil retreated to al-Dilam, where he prepared for a final defense. The subsequent siege of al-Dilam resulted in his defeat and the incorporation of the town into the Saudi state. In a typical act of consolidation, the Saudi leadership appointed Sulayman ibn Ufaysan as governor, ensuring loyalty and eliminating a major نقطة مقاومة in the region.

The final phase of the conflict came in 1188 AH (1774 CE), when Aray'ar bin Dujayn launched one last significant campaign, targeting the Qassim region. His forces succeeded in expelling the Saudi-aligned governor of Buraydah and installing a rival authority. However, his plans to continue the campaign toward Diriyah were cut short by his death shortly after his withdrawal. This event proved decisive, as it triggered internal struggles within the Bani Khalid leadership, ultimately weakening their ability to confront the Saudis.

Saudi conquest into Al hasa

The region of Al-Hasa, one of the richest and most strategically significant مناطق in eastern Arabia, was under the control of the Bani Khalid confederation at the time when the First Saudi State began to rise. The ruling family of Al-Hasa, the آل حميد of Bani Khalid, had long been a dominant force in the region, controlling trade routes, agricultural wealth, and access to the Persian Gulf.

The relationship between Diriyah and Bani Khalid was marked by hostility even before the formal establishment of the Saudi state. As early as 1721, Sa'dun bin Muhammad Al-Hamid launched an حملة into Najd, reaching Diriyah itself during the rule of Saud bin Muhammad, father of Muhammad ibn Saud. The attack resulted in the looting of parts of Diriyah, though the inhabitants resisted fiercely, inflicting heavy losses on the attackers. This early clash foreshadowed the طويل rivalry that would later define relations between the two القوى.

Following the establishment of the Saudi state in 1744, its rapid expansion across Najd posed a direct threat to the political and economic dominance of Bani Khalid. As Saudi influence grew particularly after the incorporation of settlements such as al-'Uyaynah, which had previously been aligned with Bani Khalid the leadership of Al-Hasa moved to counter this rising power.

In 1759, the Bani Khalid leader Aray'ar bin Dujayn organized a major campaign against Diriyah. Advancing deep into Najd, his forces reached the vicinity of al-Jubaylah, where local defenders had prepared fortified positions. Despite launching an assault, Aray'ar failed to capture the town. Simultaneous attempts to seize Huraymila also ended in failure. Facing

ضعف morale among his troops and unable to secure decisive victories, he chose to withdraw to Al-Hasa, postponing further confrontation.

The struggle, however, did not end. In 1762, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud led a raid into Al-Hasa during the lifetime of his father. This expedition targeted several settlements, resulting in casualties among their defenders and the capture of significant quantities of weapons and wealth. These raids demonstrated the growing قدرة of the Saudi state to project power beyond Najd and into the eastern regions.

By the 1780s, the balance of power had shifted decisively in favor of the Saudis. Having secured much of Najd, they now faced Bani Khalid as their principal rival in eastern Arabia. At the same time, internal divisions weakened the Emirate of Al-Hasa. Disputes among the آل حميد over leadership, coupled with their reliance on external alliances, eroded their political cohesion. Notably, Sa'dun bin Aray'ar sought refuge in Diriyah after being displaced by his rival Duwaihish bin Aray'ar, further illustrating the fragmentation within the ruling family.

Recognizing this opportunity, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad began to plan the conquest of Al-Hasa. In 1788, his son Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud advanced into the desert of al-Dahna, gathering intelligence and preparing for a larger campaign. In the same period, Saudi forces under Sulayman ibn Ufaysan carried out raids against settlements such as al-Jasha and the port of al-'Uqayr, testing the defenses of the region.

The first major offensive came in 1789, when Saud led an army into Al-Hasa. Among his forces were members of Bani Khalid who had defected to Diriyah. However, early engagements were inconclusive, and Saud temporarily withdrew, reportedly due to doubts about the loyalty of some of his قوات.

Later that same year, Saud returned with renewed determination. He confronted the inhabitants of al-Mubarraz, engaging in exchanges of musket fire, before advancing eastward to the village of al-Fudul. There, Saudi forces inflicted heavy losses, reportedly killing around three

hundred defenders. These actions signaled a transition from probing raids to full-scale conquest.

The decisive turning point came in 1790 at the Battle of Ghuraymil. In this major engagement, Saud bin Abdulaziz led a large force against the الجيش of Bani Khalid near Al-Hasa. The battle ended in a decisive Saudi victory: large numbers of Bani Khalid fighters were killed, substantial booty was captured, and many of their leaders fled toward Qatar and al-Zubarah. In the aftermath, Saud appointed Zaid bin Arayʿar himself from the ruling family as emir, attempting to stabilize the region under Saudi authority.

However, control over Al-Hasa remained contested. In 1793, internal conflict erupted within Bani Khalid when factions rebelled against Zaid bin Arayʿar after the killing of a prominent leader, Abd al-Muhsin bin Sardah. The rebels installed Barak bin Abd al-Muhsin as their new emir, who quickly began launching raids to assert his authority. This defiance prompted Abdulaziz bin Muhammad to dispatch Saud once more to suppress the uprising.

The resulting Battle of al-Shayt proved decisive. Saudi forces defeated the rebels, dealing a devastating blow to the قدرت of Bani Khalid. Historians have often regarded this battle as the moment that effectively ended their dominance in eastern Arabia.

Shortly thereafter, in 1793, delegations from Al-Hasa invited Saud to enter the region. He advanced and established his authority, receiving the allegiance of local inhabitants. Administrative reforms followed, including the appointment of Muhammad al-Hamli as governor, signaling the formal integration of Al-Hasa into the Saudi state.

Despite this, resistance did not entirely cease. In 1794, shortly after Saudi forces withdrew, a rebellion broke out in Al-Hasa, during which local insurgents killed Saudi officials and preachers. Saud responded swiftly, returning with an army and conducting a series of punitive campaigns. Key towns such as al-Mubarraz were retaken, and rival leaders—including Zaid bin Arayʿar were defeated and driven into exile.

Through a combination of military pressure and negotiated settlements, the Saudis gradually restored order. By the end of these campaigns, the independent rule of Bani Khalid in Al-Hasa had effectively come to an end. The region was incorporated into the expanding Saudi state, marking one of its most significant territorial gains.

Further unrest occurred in 1796, when another major rebellion broke out during Ramadan. Saudi forces under Ibn Ufaysan suppressed the uprising, after which Saud himself led an additional campaign later that year, imposing strict measures to prevent further revolts.

With Al-Hasa largely secured though some eastern المناطق and Qatif remained contested Saudi forces continued operations along the eastern frontier. Campaigns were launched against local rulers such as Ibn Hamad, whose fortified positions were eventually besieged and captured.

The Saudi Conquest of Qatif and Tarout

The final subjugation of the region of Qatif marked the decisive conclusion of the long-standing struggle between the First Saudi State and the remnants of the Bani Khalid power in eastern Arabia. Following the gradual collapse of the independent authority of the Al-Humaid family in Al-Hasa in 1208 AH (1794 CE), the Saudis moved toward securing full control over the eastern coastline of the Arabian Peninsula.

Although Al-Hasa had already fallen, resistance persisted in several coastal strongholds, most notably in Qatif and its surrounding settlements. These areas represented both a strategic and economic prize, given their access to maritime trade routes and their role as the final centers of Khalidi influence.

The groundwork for the final conquest had been laid earlier in 1206 AH (1792 CE), when Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud launched a major expedition toward the Qatif region. This campaign was not initially aimed at complete annexation, but rather at weakening local resistance and asserting Saudi

military presence in a region known for its strong opposition to Diriyah's authority.

During this early phase, Saudi forces besieged and captured the town of Saihat, followed by the occupation of nearby villages including Anak, Qudaih, and al-Awamiyah. The army then advanced toward the main port of Qatif, placing it under siege. The confrontation ended with a negotiated settlement, in which the local population agreed to pay a substantial tribute of 3,000 gold coins. At this stage, the Saudi objective was primarily the establishment of authority and the extraction of compliance rather than full territorial integration.

Following the decisive Saudi victory in Al-Hasa in 1794, pockets of resistance remained concentrated in Qatif. To eliminate this final opposition, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud dispatched a large expeditionary force estimated at approximately 8,000 fighters under the command of Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan. This marked the beginning of the final and most intense phase of the campaign.

At this time, leadership within the region was fragmented. Abdullah bin Sulayman al-Muhayshuri al-Khalidi commanded the remaining Bani Khalid military forces, while Ahmad bin Ghanim al-Qatifi exercised authority within the urban center of Qatif itself. This division of command weakened the coherence of the defense and contributed to the eventual Saudi success.

Ibn Ufaysan's forces initially advanced toward Saihat, where they encountered resistance from a contingent led by Ali bin Abdullah. In this engagement, the Saudis suffered a setback and were forced to withdraw temporarily toward Dhahran. Despite this reversal, Ibn Ufaysan soon resumed operations, conducting raids across the outskirts of Qatif in an effort to weaken enemy positions.

In response, Abdullah bin Sulayman launched a counteroffensive with his main forces, leaving Ahmad bin Ghanim to defend the fortified town. The opposing armies eventually clashed in a fierce and prolonged engagement

near al-Jarudiyah. After approximately twelve days of continuous fighting, Abdullah bin Sulayman was defeated and forced to retreat toward Tarout Island, where he took refuge in its fortified castle.

Following this defeat, Ahmad bin Ghanim attempted to organize the defense of Qatif's citadel. Although he initially agreed to surrender upon Ibn Ufaysan's demand, he ultimately refrained out of fear of retaliation from remaining Khalidi forces. As a result, Ibn Ufaysan launched a direct assault on the fortress, capturing Qatif by force. The city fell, and many of its inhabitants were killed or dispersed during the fighting, while Ahmad bin Ghanim and his supporters managed to escape.

With Qatif secured, attention shifted to the final stronghold of Khalidi resistance on Tarout Island, where Abdullah bin Sulayman had regrouped. Ibn Ufaysan dispatched his brother, Fahd, with a force of approximately 2,000 men to storm the island. However, the initial assault on the fortified castle failed, and Saudi forces suffered heavy losses. Even after receiving reinforcements, the siege made little progress, forcing Fahd to withdraw.

Seizing the opportunity, Abdullah bin Sulayman launched a surprise counterattack against the Saudi encampment, inflicting a significant defeat and capturing supplies while killing approximately 200 soldiers. In response, Ibn Ufaysan was instructed by the central leadership not to fall into further traps and to maintain his position until reinforcements arrived.

Subsequently, additional troops arrived under the command of Salih bin Rashid Al-Dosari. A coordinated plan was then developed in which Ibn Ufaysan would lead the main assault on Tarout while Al-Dosari secured control of Qatif. With reinforcements in place, the Saudi forces renewed their offensive and laid siege to the island.

After twenty-one days of sustained pressure, the Saudi army succeeded in storming Tarout Island and capturing its fortress. Abdullah bin Sulayman escaped and fled toward the territories of Al-Muntafiq, marking the effective collapse of remaining Khalidi resistance in the eastern region.

According to the anonymous chronicle *Lama' al-Shihab fi Sirat Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab*, while precise dates are not consistently provided, these events occurred during the reign of Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud. The source confirms the overall sequence of campaigns leading to the consolidation of Saudi authority over the eastern coast.

Military Structure and Early Campaigns

The military history of the First Saudi State cannot be understood merely as a sequence of battles or territorial expansions. Rather, it reflects the

gradual formation of a new political-military system that emerged in the heart of Najd during the eighteenth century. From its earliest stages, the Saudi state was shaped by constant warfare, shifting alliances, and the necessity of defending a rapidly expanding authority across a fragmented tribal landscape.

Unlike the standing armies of established empires such as the Ottoman Empire, the military forces of the early Saudi state were not initially institutionalized in a rigid or centralized form. Instead, they were built upon a flexible structure rooted in tribal mobilization, religious allegiance, and local leadership. Military participation was closely tied to loyalty to the ruling authority in Diriyah and to the ideological framework introduced through the alliance between Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab

The Military of the First Saudi State

The military system of the First Saudi State represented a distinctive model of warfare that combined tribal mobilization, religious motivation, and pragmatic adaptation to the harsh environment of Najd. From its

formation in 1727 until its fall in 1818, the state relied on a hybrid military structure that blended permanent forces with large-scale voluntary and conscripted fighters. This system was designed not only for defense but also for territorial expansion and the consolidation of political authority. Unlike centralized imperial armies such as those of the Ottoman Empire or European powers such as the French empire or the British, the Saudi military did not initially operate as a standing professional force. Instead, it functioned through a system of mobilization known as the *nafeer* (conscription). Under this system, the Imam or his appointed representative would request a specific number of fighters from tribal leaders and regional governors. These forces were obligated to respond and assemble at designated gathering points, often located near water sources essential for desert campaigns.

Once assembled, the army would be organized under the leadership of the Imam, typically departing from Diriyah on selected days such as Monday or Thursday to maintain coordination and discipline. In addition to these mobilized forces, the state maintained a limited number of permanent soldiers, including the ruler's personal guards in Diriyah and detachments assigned to protect regional governors and strategic locations.

The composition of the army reflected the social structure of the region. The majority of fighters were tribal volunteers or conscripts who provided their own mounts, weapons, and provisions. In cases of prolonged campaigns, the state supplemented these resources. Some soldiers served temporarily in frontier fortresses or garrisons located in contested or newly acquired territories, helping to secure regions that had not yet been fully integrated into Saudi administration.

Saudi military operations followed a relatively structured pattern shaped by desert warfare and the need for mobility. When an army was approximately three days' march from its target, scouts were dispatched

to gather intelligence on enemy positions, strength, and movement. These reconnaissance efforts were essential for planning engagements in an environment where surprise and terrain played decisive roles.

As the army advanced, it typically halted before sunset, allowing soldiers to rest and perform prayers before resuming movement at dawn.

Approaching enemy territory, commanders emphasized speed and surprise, often refraining from lighting fires the night before an attack to conceal their position.

Strategic priorities in battle included the control of high ground and access to water sources, both of which were critical for sustaining forces in desert conditions. Before engagements, commanders addressed the troops, reinforcing discipline, discouraging arrogance, and emphasizing reliance on coordination rather than numerical superiority.

Battle itself often began after the Fajr prayer, with soldiers advancing while chanting declarations of faith such as *Allahu Akbar*. Combat relied heavily on mobility, direct engagement, and familiarity with desert terrain, rather than formalized drill formations typical of European-style armies

weapons of the First Saudi State

The armament of the First Saudi State reflected both local adaptation and broader global trade patterns. The most widely used firearm was the matchlock musket (*tafaq*), which utilized a smoldering cord (*fatīla*) to ignite gunpowder. A mechanical serpentine arm lowered the burning cord into the firing pan, triggering the shot.

Although European powers were increasingly adopting flintlock technology during this period, matchlocks remained widely used in Najd. They were considered more reliable in the region's dry climate and less prone to misfiring under desert conditions. Many of these weapons were imported as surplus from global arms markets and adapted locally for Saudi use.

The Saudi military was not limited to firearms. It also relied on traditional weapons such as spears, swords, daggers, and bows. In some campaigns, captured artillery pieces were incorporated into the army. The typical fighting force consisted of infantry armed with matchlock or flintlock firearms and Arabian swords and camel-mounted units that provided mobility across desert terrain with elite cavalry estimated at approximately 3000 to 4000 heavily armed horsemen provided shock capability and rapid maneuvering during key engagements with Wahhabi artillery units.

At its peak, the state was capable of mobilizing extremely large forces, though these numbers varied significantly depending on the campaign and tribal participation. The highest ever recorded that the state could mobilize was 130,000 to 145,000. Thousand troops each with its infantry caverly artillery units.

Security played a central role in the stability and expansion of the First Saudi State. Tribal leaders were held responsible for maintaining order within their communities and ensuring that criminals could not find refuge among them. This system reinforced both social discipline and political loyalty to the state.

To maintain control over key regions, the state established military garrisons in strategic locations. These garrisons operated on a rotational basis, with personnel typically serving one-year terms. They were stationed in important centers such as Hofuf, Qatif, Buraimi, as well as major urban centers including Makkah, Madinah, and Taif after their incorporation.

In addition, governors and regional administrators maintained personal guards to ensure local security and enforce authority. This layered system of control allowed the Saudi state to maintain order across a geographically vast and socially diverse territory.

The military system of the First Saudi State was neither purely tribal nor fully centralized, but rather a hybrid structure shaped by necessity, geography, and ideology. Its reliance on mobilization, combined with strong religious motivation and adaptive desert warfare tactics, enabled it to expand rapidly across Arabia became a major power in the region

While lacking the formal organization of contemporary imperial armies, its flexibility and cohesion under the leadership of the Imams in Diriyah allowed it to achieve a level of military effectiveness that reshaped the political landscape of the Arabian Peninsula

Features of Military Clothing reflected both practicality and the environmental conditions of warfare in Najd. Unlike the highly standardized uniforms of later modern armies, Saudi fighters did not wear uniform dress in the strict sense. However, over time, a recognizable pattern of clothing and protective equipment emerged among many of their forces. The typical combat dress consisted of light, breathable white garments suited to the harsh desert climate. White clothing helped reduce heat absorption during long marches and desert campaigns. Over these garments, some fighters wore strapped black leather chest pieces reinforced with metal plates. These provided limited protection against sword strikes and projectiles while still allowing mobility, which was essential in fast-moving desert warfare

Rather than heavy armor, emphasis was placed on agility, endurance, and adaptability. Soldiers needed to move quickly across open terrain, mount and dismount camels, and engage in sudden raids or retreats. As a result, military clothing reflected a balance between protection and mobility rather than full battlefield armor.

Although the First Saudi State is primarily associated with desert warfare, its influence extended significantly into the Gulf region, where it

developed alliances with powerful maritime forces. The most important of these was the fleet of the Al Qawasim, based in the lower Gulf region. At its height between approximately 1809 and 1819, the Qawasim maritime power—acting in alignment with the First Saudi State—emerged as one of the most dominant naval forces in the Arabian Gulf. Estimates suggest that their fleet included between 60 and 100 major war vessels, supported by dozens of smaller craft, with a total maritime force that may have reached several hundred ships when including merchant vessels and auxiliary craft. This naval strength allowed them to exert significant influence over regional trade routes and coastal settlements, a formidable force estimated at over 60–100 large warships (carrying ~400 cannons/8,000 men) and up to 40 smaller vessels, dominating regional trade with the Combined fleet of 754 total ships (including merchant vessels) by shared opposition to expanding British influence in the Gulf, particularly that of the East India Company. This confrontation transformed the Gulf into a contested maritime zone during the early nineteenth century. The flagship of Rahmah ibn Jabir al-Jalahimah, often described as a “mobile command center,” symbolized the power of allied maritime leadership operating in coordination with the Saudi cause. Captured European vessels such as *Minerva* and *Trimmer*, originally British merchant ships, were repurposed and converted into heavily armed warships. These vessels significantly enhanced the naval capabilities of the Qawasim fleet. Earlier captures, including ships such as *Shannon*, demonstrated the ability of Gulf maritime forces to seize and repurpose foreign shipping during this period of conflict.

The naval strength of the Qawasim and their allies was based on a diverse range of traditional and adapted vessel types. The largest and most important type of dhow, often reaching up to 30 meters in length. It featured a high square stern and was used for both trade and warfare. *Battil* A fast and agile vessel used for coastal defense, reconnaissance, and raids. *Boom* A large, versatile dhow with a distinctive high prow, used for long-distance navigation, transport, and combat operations. *Sambuq* One of the most widespread and efficient Gulf vessels, used in pearling, trade, and naval warfare. *Ghrab* (Grab) A shallow-draft fighting vessel often

equipped with cannons, well-suited for operations in reef-heavy and coastal waters

These vessels formed the backbone of Gulf naval activity during this period and allowed local powers to challenge European maritime dominance in regional waters

The Iraqi Campaign Against Tanuma (1786 CE)

The Iraqi campaign against Tanuma in 1786 CE represents one of the most violent and ideologically significant early confrontations between the First Saudi State and its northern rivals. It occurred during a period of increasing tension between the expanding Saudi polity in Najd and the Ottoman-backed authorities and tribal coalitions operating in southern Iraq.

The offensive was led by the Emir of Al-Muntafiq, a powerful tribal federation that functioned as one of the principal instruments of Ottoman influence in the region. He assembled a large and diverse coalition drawn from multiple Iraqi and Bedouin groups, including Al-Muntafiq forces themselves, as well as fighters from Al-Majara, Al-Zubayr, and tribes such as Shammar, Ghālib, and Tayy. This coalition represented one of the most substantial military forces to enter central Arabia during this period.

The army advanced deep into Najdi territory, where it launched a direct assault on Tanuma. The town was captured by force, and the event was marked by severe violence against its inhabitants, an episode later remembered in regional sources as the “Massacre of Tanuma.” The scale of destruction generated widespread fear across central Arabia and intensified the perception of an escalating frontier war between Najd and southern Iraq.

Following this initial success, the coalition advanced further and laid siege to the strategically important town of Buraidah in the Qassim. However, at the height of the siege, the Emir of Al-Muntafiq received urgent reports of internal unrest and the possibility of rebellion within his own territories in

southern Iraq. Concerned that prolonged absence could destabilize his base of power, he ordered an immediate withdrawal of his forces, lifting the siege and abandoning the campaign. Although Buraidah had been heavily pressured, it remained unconquered.

Rather than weakening the First Saudi State, the attack and the violence at Tanuma had the opposite effect. The event strengthened Saudi determination and intensified hostility toward their northern adversaries. It also contributed to the hardening of ideological and political divisions between Diriyah, the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq, and Ottoman authorities in Iraq.

In response to these developments, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud initiated a formal diplomatic exchange with Sulayman Pasha the Great. As part of this correspondence, he sent an official letter accompanied by a copy of Kitab al-Tawhid, the foundational text of the reformist movement led by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

In his message, the Imam invited the scholars of Baghdad to examine the text and consider its theological arguments. However, the Ottoman governor rejected the invitation, dismissing the message and responding with ridicule toward the reformist doctrine. This rejection reinforced the deepening ideological divide between the two sides.

From the Saudi perspective, this response carried significant implications. It was interpreted as formal confirmation that the authorities of Iraq stood in opposition to the reformist call. As a result, regions under Ottoman influence in Iraq were increasingly viewed within the Saudi ideological framework as areas of conflict, shaping later military and political engagements along the northern frontier.

The Kuwait Expedition (1793 CE)

The year 1793 CE (1207 AH) marked a significant stage in the outward expansion of the First Saudi State, as its military operations began extending beyond the traditional heartland of Najd toward the eastern

coastline of Arabia and the northern Gulf. This phase reflected a broader strategic objective: consolidating control over the eastern frontier and neutralizing emerging coastal powers that could threaten the authority of Diriyah.

Among the most important targets of this expansion was the port settlement of Kuwait, then locally known as al-Qurayn and governed by the Al Sabah family. Although relatively small in size, Kuwait occupied a position of major strategic importance at the northern edge of the Persian Gulf, serving as a key hub for maritime trade and regional connectivity. At the time, it maintained complex political relations, including commercial ties with the British East India Company and varying degrees of alignment with Ottoman-influenced authorities in the region.

The Saudi expedition against Kuwait was led by the experienced commander Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan. Unlike earlier localized campaigns in central Arabia, this operation represented a deliberate attempt to extend Saudi influence into a maritime and commercially oriented environment. The objective was not only military confrontation but also the disruption of emerging alliances between coastal powers and European commercial interests.

Saudi forces advanced toward Kuwait using the mobility and desert warfare tactics that had defined their success in Najd. The expedition demonstrated the growing operational reach of the Saudi military system, which by this stage had already achieved significant victories against the Bani Khalid in Al-Hasa. Although the campaign did not result in permanent occupation, it represented a clear projection of force into a region previously beyond the traditional sphere of Najdi warfare.

The incursion had a wider strategic and psychological impact. It marked one of the earliest instances in which the First Saudi State directly challenged a coastal polity with external commercial and political ties. This development significantly altered regional perceptions of power in Arabia, signaling that Diriyah was no longer confined to inland tribal warfare but was capable of influencing Gulf politics.

The expansion into the northern Gulf also drew the attention of European powers operating in the region. British officials, concerned by the emergence of a politically and religiously driven movement capable of threatening their commercial networks, began increasing surveillance of Saudi activity. Figures such as William Drury and Thomas Keith were later involved in monitoring developments associated with the Wahhabi–Saudi movement. Similarly, French observers in the region, including Commander Vassière operating from Oman, also recorded the growing significance of Diriyah’s influence.

From the Saudi perspective, the expedition reinforced a new strategic reality: the state had become capable of projecting power beyond the desert interior into maritime frontier zones. Even without territorial annexation, the campaign against Kuwait represented a turning point in the political geography of Arabia, marking the transition of the First Saudi State from a regional Najdi power into an emerging force with Gulf-wide implications.

Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad’s Entry into Ottoman Iraq (1788 CE)

The late eighteenth century marked a decisive phase in the expansion of the First Saudi State beyond the central Arabian plateau and into the contested frontier zones of southern Iraq. During this period, relations between Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud and the regional authorities of Iraq deteriorated sharply, particularly with the emergence of sustained conflict involving the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq and the Mamluk administration governing southern Iraq under Ottoman authority.

At the heart of this confrontation was not only military rivalry but also a deep ideological division. In an attempt to extend the influence of the reformist movement associated with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad sent a formal message to Sulayman Pasha the Great. The letter was accompanied by a copy of the treatise *Kitab*

al-Tawhid (“The Book of Monotheism”), one of the foundational works of the Wahhabi doctrine.

In his message, the Imam called upon the governor of Baghdad to assemble the leading scholars of the city to examine the text and consider its theological arguments. The intent of this diplomatic gesture was to initiate a scholarly engagement that might lead to the acceptance of the reformist interpretation of Islamic monotheism. However, the response from the Ottoman administration was dismissive. Sulayman Pasha rejected the proposal, treating the message with skepticism and openly underestimating the significance of the reformist call.

From the perspective of the First Saudi State, this rejection had profound ideological implications. The refusal to engage with the text was interpreted not merely as political disagreement but as religious opposition. As a result, the regions under Ottoman influence in Iraq began to be viewed by Saudi scholars and leaders as part of a *Dar al-Harb* (land of conflict), reflecting a worldview in which religious legitimacy and political authority were deeply interconnected.

At the same time, tribal dynamics in southern Iraq further intensified tensions. Several Shiite tribes in the region played an active role in supporting the Bani Khalid confederation and other groups opposed to Saudi expansion in Najd. This alignment contributed to a growing sense of hostility between the emerging Saudi state and the frontier regions of Iraq, particularly in areas where tribal alliances intersected with Ottoman authority.

In response to this evolving situation, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad authorized punitive and strategic military actions against hostile groups in southern Iraq. In 1203 AH (1788 CE), his son Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud led a military expedition that marked the first direct Saudi incursion into Iraqi territory. This force advanced toward the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq and engaged its troops at a location known as al-Rawdatayn, situated between al-Mutla‘ and Safwan.

The engagement resulted in a Saudi victory, with the forces of Al-Muntafiq suffering losses, including the wounding of their leader Hamoud bin Thamer. Although not a large-scale occupation, this operation was historically significant, as it represented the first documented Saudi military penetration into the borders of Iraq, extending the conflict beyond its traditional Najdi theater.

Following this initial confrontation, the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq continued to serve as a refuge for individuals and factions fleeing Saudi authority in central Arabia. Among those who sought protection there were members of the Bani Khalid leadership, including Abdul-Muhsin bin Sardah and his followers in 1204 AH (1789 CE). Later, in 1207 AH (1792 CE), Barak bin Abdul-Muhsin also took refuge in the same region after internal struggles within the Khalidi leadership.

These developments reinforced the transformation of southern Iraq into a strategic rear base for anti-Saudi elements, further entrenching the geopolitical and ideological divide between the First Saudi State and its northern neighbors. The interaction between diplomacy, ideology, and military action during this period marked a critical stage in the evolution of Saudi-Iraqi relations

Expansion in Eastern Arabia and the Gulf (1793–1808)

The period between 1793 and 1808 CE marked a decisive phase in the transformation of the First Saudi State from a primarily inland power based in Diriyah into a regional force capable of projecting authority across both eastern Arabia and the wider Gulf. During these years, the state intensified its campaigns beyond the desert interior of Najd, targeting coastal settlements, commercial ports, and strategic trade routes that connected Arabia with Iraq, Persia, and the Indian Ocean world.

The Fall of Qatar and Al-Zubarah (1793–1799)

Following the decisive consolidation of the First Saudi State in Al-Hasa in the early 1790s, the leadership in Diriyah redirected its strategic focus toward the eastern maritime frontier, particularly the Qatar Peninsula. This region had begun to emerge as a significant center of both political refuge and commercial activity, making it a natural extension of Saudi expansion in eastern Arabia.

At the heart of this development stood the prosperous coastal town of Al Zubarah, which had grown into one of the most important ports in the northern Gulf. Its economic prosperity, combined with its strategic coastal position, made it a refuge for political opponents of Diriyah, including leading figures of the defeated Bani Khalid establishment such as Zaid bin Arir and Abdulmuhsin, as well as displaced groups from Al-Hasa who had fled the Saudi advance. As a result, Al-Zubarah increasingly functioned as both a commercial hub and a center of political opposition.

In this context, the town became an inevitable target for the expanding First Saudi State. Under the justification of spreading the reformist teachings associated with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud authorized a military campaign into the peninsula, assigning the experienced commander Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan to lead the expedition.

The first phase of the campaign reached Qatar in 1791, where Saudi forces engaged local tribal groups in a series of clashes that resulted in casualties among the defenders and demonstrated the vulnerability of the peninsula's fragmented political structure. A subsequent offensive in 1793 targeted the settlement of al-Huwaylah, governed by the Al-Musallam clan. The town was quickly captured, along with nearby settlements such as Fariha, al-Yusufiyyah, and al-Ruwaidha, leaving Al-Zubarah as the last major stronghold resisting Saudi authority on the mainland.

After the consolidation of Saudi control in Al-Hasa in 1794, Ibn Ufaysan received authorization to intensify operations against Al-Zubarah. Recognizing the limitations of lacking a naval fleet, he adopted a strategy based on land encirclement, siege warfare, and systematic disruption of

resources. Saudi forces cut off access to essential supplies, including freshwater wells located several miles outside the town and nearby sources of firewood, effectively isolating the settlement from its surrounding environment.

This strategy gradually weakened Al-Zubarah's capacity to sustain itself. Simultaneously, Saudi raiding parties expanded operations across the peninsula, further disrupting external support networks and reinforcing the isolation of the town. Although the inhabitants initially resisted, the prolonged nature of the siege made continued defense increasingly unsustainable.

Faced with the inevitability of collapse under land-based pressure, the population of Al-Zubarah ultimately chose to evacuate the city. They departed by sea, relocating to the island of Bahrain, where they settled in the region of Jaw and constructed a fortified position to continue their resistance from a maritime base. This evacuation prevented the complete destruction of the population but effectively ended Al-Zubarah's role as a mainland center of opposition.

Prior to their departure, the inhabitants deliberately dismantled their defensive installations at al-Akwat to prevent their use by Saudi forces. This act of destruction reflected a strategic decision to deny the enemy immediate fortification capabilities upon occupation. Following the evacuation, Saudi forces entered the abandoned town, establishing control over the site without significant resistance.

Although Al-Zubarah had been emptied rather than conventionally conquered, its fall represented a decisive strategic victory for the First Saudi State. It eliminated the last major center of organized opposition in Qatar and secured Saudi influence across the peninsula, extending its authority over key coastal zones of the eastern Arabian Gulf.

The Kuwaiti–Saudi Conflict and the Northern Gulf Frontier (1793–1808)

The growing instability of the eastern Arabian coast in the late eighteenth century, particularly following the weakening of the Bani Khalid Emirate after its defeat at Al-Hasa, opened the northern Gulf to direct military and political confrontation. With the expansion of the First Saudi State under the leadership of Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, attention increasingly turned toward the maritime frontier, where the wealthy trading communities of the Gulf represented both strategic targets and potential sources of resistance. Among these coastal centers, Kuwait occupied a particularly sensitive position. Governed by the Al Sabah family, Kuwait had developed into an important commercial hub, benefiting from maritime trade networks that extended across the Gulf and into the Indian Ocean. Its economic prosperity, combined with its relative political autonomy, made it both attractive and vulnerable to external pressures.

Despite repeated Saudi campaigns in eastern Arabia, Kuwait did not formally enter into military alliance with the Bani Khalid against the Saudis. However, it became a refuge for displaced figures from Al-Hasa and other defeated groups, which placed it in a politically ambiguous and increasingly tense position.

The first documented Saudi raid against Kuwait occurred in 1208 AH (1793 CE), led by the commander Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan. A force composed of fighters from regions such as al-Kharj, al-‘Arid, and Sudair advanced toward the outskirts of Kuwait, where they engaged local defenders in a brief but violent confrontation. The engagement resulted in casualties among the Kuwaiti defenders and the seizure of livestock and weapons by Saudi forces before their withdrawal.

Contemporary accounts describe this as an early demonstration of Saudi mobility and desert warfare tactics, rather than a full-scale occupation attempt. Nevertheless, it signaled the beginning of sustained pressure on Kuwait and the surrounding frontier. In the years that followed, Saudi incursions into the region continued intermittently. Raids near Kuwait's outskirts created persistent insecurity, as small mobile groups operated around wells and grazing areas, disrupting local stability. Although these

attacks rarely resulted in territorial gains, they contributed to a climate of tension and uncertainty along the northern Gulf frontier

In 1212 AH (1798 CE), another raid was conducted under the leadership of Mana' Abu Rijlayn, acting under Saudi authority. The force attacked peripheral settlements and livestock routes, prompting a local counter-mobilization by Kuwaiti forces. An ambush resulted in casualties on both sides, with Saudi forces capturing weapons and supplies before withdrawing Kuwait, in response, also engaged in limited retaliatory expeditions against tribes aligned with the First Saudi State. However, these operations remained constrained and did not significantly alter the balance of power.

Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz led an army in 1804 attack Kuwaiti forces Near the capital city Achieved great victories against the enemy Forced Kuwait to pay tribute to the Saudi state

The most serious confrontation occurred in 1223 AH (1808 CE), when Saudi forces attempted a direct siege of Kuwait. After Sheikh Abdullah of Kuwait refused to pay tribute, a Saudi force estimated at several thousand men was dispatched to enforce submission. The siege, however, failed to achieve its objectives due to Kuwait's defensive resilience and its strategic maritime position

During this period, the Ottoman administration in Baghdad, represented by Sulayman Pasha the Great, reportedly acknowledged Kuwait's resistance by offering diplomatic recognition and gifts to its leadership. At the same time, Saudi efforts to mobilize allied fleets from coastal powers such as the Qawasim and other Gulf rulers were unsuccessful, reflecting the limits of Saudi naval influence

Although slightly beyond the main chronological scope of this section, the Battle of Khikayra in 1811 illustrates the continuing maritime dimension of the conflict. Saudi-aligned forces, including commanders such as Rahmah ibn Jabir and Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan, engaged a coalition fleet composed of Kuwaiti and Bahraini vessels near the Bahraini coast. The battle resulted in

heavy casualties on both sides and demonstrated the growing importance of naval warfare in the Gulf theater

As a result, Kuwait retained its political autonomy throughout this phase, even as it remained within the sphere of Saudi influence

Saudi Invasion of Bahrain (1801)

By 1797, the Al Khalifa leadership under Sheikh Salman bin Ahmad had temporarily settled in the village of Jaw in Bahrain. However, their position remained unstable, as the island soon came under the influence of Muscat, ruled by Sultan bin Ahmad of the Al Bu Sa'id dynasty, who appointed his brother to administer the island. This situation created a volatile political environment in which competing regional powers sought control over Bahrain's strategically valuable position and its maritime trade routes to India and China. Amid this instability, the Al Khalifa leadership sought support from the expanding First Saudi State under Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, requesting assistance to regain control of Bahrain from Muscat's influence. In response, the Saudi leadership authorized a military expedition led by the experienced commander Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan.

The Saudi forces advanced into Bahrain and succeeded in expelling the garrison aligned with Muscat in 1801. This operation marked one of the earliest successful Saudi interventions in the maritime Gulf environment, extending their influence beyond the mainland territories of Al-Hasa into an island polity of significant economic and strategic importance.

Following the victory, however, Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan did not restore full authority to the Al Khalifa leadership. Instead, he declared the incorporation of Bahrain under Saudi control and established his administrative base at the fort of al-Diwan. This decision effectively transformed the expedition from a supportive intervention into direct occupation. The Saudi presence in Bahrain triggered immediate resistance. The Al Khalifa family, refusing to accept permanent displacement, sought assistance from multiple regional actors, including the ruler of Muscat,

allied Persian forces, and their relatives among the Gulf tribal confederations. In coordination with these allies they launched counterattacks against the Saudi garrison. Despite initial Saudi control, the Bahraini counteroffensive succeeded in expelling the Saudi garrison, capturing key personnel, and taking prisoners as leverage in negotiations with Diriyah.

Saudi Expansion into Persian Gulf (1805)

geopolitical ambitions of the First Saudi State, as it transitioned from a predominantly inland power into an active participant in Gulf affairs. Following the consolidation of authority in Al-Hasa during the 1790s, the leadership in Diriyah increasingly viewed the Persian Gulf not merely as a frontier, but as a strategic area. A central element in this expansion was the alliance with the Al Qawasim, whose stronghold lay in Ras Al Khaimah and along the so-called Pirate Coast. The Qawasim had long relied on maritime trade as their primary economic activity. Their fleet was formidable, reportedly consisting of dozens of large vessels and hundreds of smaller ships, employing thousands of sailors. Trade with Indian ports formed the backbone of their economy, supplying essential goods such as timber and provisions necessary for shipbuilding and survival.

However, relations between the Qawasim and the British East India Company deteriorated significantly between 1778 and 1797. British officials increasingly labeled the Qawasim as “pirates,” while simultaneously attempting to impose a restrictive maritime system requiring all Gulf vessels to carry British-issued passes. This policy effectively sought to monopolize trade and limit the autonomy of local maritime powers. From the Qasimi perspective, these measures represented an unacceptable infringement on their traditional rights to navigate and trade freely within Gulf waters.

In 1799 Wahhabi forces aiming to expand their influence into the eastern Arabian Peninsula, targeted the Qasimi tribes located in Ras Al Khaimah.

and surrounding areas They swept through Modern day UAE In a major push Wahhabi forces led by Salim al-Kharq and Mutlaq bin Muhammad

Al-Mutairi laid siege to Ras Al Khaimah for 17 days with an army of around 4,000 soldiers, eventually defeating the Qasimis and there Subjugation into The Saudi State

Tensions escalated sharply in the early 1800s. In 1804, an incident involving a British vessel near the Gulf islands intensified hostilities, followed by the capture of ships such as the *Shannon* and *Trimmer* in 1805. British reports themselves indicate that these encounters often began with confrontation and misidentification, reflecting the fragile and highly volatile nature of maritime relations at the time

In response, British authorities in India began formulating a more aggressive policy aimed at suppressing the Qawasim. Officials such as Samuel Manesty advocated for economic blockades and the restriction of Gulf trade, arguing that cutting off access to Indian ports would force Arab maritime communities into submission At the same time, British strategy shifted toward direct intervention. Orders were issued to coordinate with the ruler of Muscat and to launch joint operations against Qasimi strongholds. Campaigns were initiated in 1805, including attacks on coastal positions such as Bandar Abbas, though not all of these actions strictly followed initial British directives Qasimi fleets supported politically and ideologically by the Saudi state launching naval campaigns against British, Omani, and Persian shipping. From the Saudi-Qasimi perspective, these actions were framed not as piracy but as legitimate warfare against foreign encroachment and hostile regional powers One of the most significant developments of this period was the expansion of influence toward the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz. Saudi-aligned Qasimi forces extended operations to key نقاط بحرية, including the island of Qeshm. The capture and control of such المواقع represented the furthest eastern reach of Saudi influence during this era

Despite these tensions, diplomacy briefly prevailed. In 1806, a treaty known as the “Qawasim Agreement” was concluded between Saudi-

Qasimi representatives and the British. The agreement provided for mutual recognition, safe passage, and respect for property, temporarily stabilizing relations while acknowledging the continued importance of Qasimi maritime power

The Iraqi Front and Ottoman Conflict (1788–1811)

From the late eighteenth century onward, the northern frontier of the First Saudi State emerged as one of its most volatile and strategically significant theaters. Beginning in 1788, relations between the leadership in Diriyah and the Ottoman-controlled regions of Iraq deteriorated rapidly, transforming a borderland of tribal interaction into a sustained zone of military and ideological confrontation.

Thuwaini bin Abdullah Campaigns

The first major Ottoman-aligned counteroffensive against the rising power of the First Saudi State came in 1786, led by Thuwaini bin Abdullah

Al-Saadoun, the powerful emir of the Al-Muntafiq Confederation. Acting as the primary instrument of Ottoman authority in southern Iraq, Thuwaini assembled a massive tribal coalition that included forces from Al-Muntafiq, Al-Ghara, Al-Zubair, and major Bedouin tribes such as Shammar, Ghālib, and Tayy. This large and heavily armed force advanced deep into Najd, striking directly at the Saudi heartland. The campaign reached its most brutal moment with the assault on Tanuma, where the town was stormed and many of its inhabitants were killed in what became known as the Massacre of Tanuma. The psychological impact of this event was immense, spreading fear across central Arabia.

Following this, Thuwaini pushed further into the Qassim region and laid siege to Buraidah, one of the key strongholds of the First Saudi State. However, the attackers failed to breach the city. Urgent news arrived of unrest in his home territories in southern Iraq. Concerned about losing control of his base, Thuwaini was forced to lift the siege and withdraw, leaving Buraidah damaged but unconquered.

It transformed tensions into a direct and sustained conflict between Diriyah and the Ottoman-aligned *القوى العراقية*. In response, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud initiated a diplomatic yet ideological move by sending a message to Suleiman Pasha the Great, accompanied by the book *Kitab al-Tawhid* by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. He called upon the scholars of Baghdad to examine and accept its teachings. The response was dismissive and mocking, reinforcing the Saudi perception that Ottoman *العراق* had become a *Dar al-Harb* (Land of War). This ideological shift justified future Saudi campaigns into *العراق*.

Soon after, in 1788, Saud bin Abdulaziz launched a retaliatory expedition into southern Iraq. At Al-Rawdatayn, between Al-Mutla' and Safwan, Saudi forces achieved a decisive victory over Al-Muntafiq, wounding its leader Hamoud bin Thamer. This marked the first Saudi military incursion into Iraqi territory, signaling a shift from defense to offensive warfare. The conflict escalated further as southern Iraq became a refuge for enemies of the Saudi state. Leaders of the defeated Bani Khalid Emirate, including

Abdul-Muhsin bin Sardah (1789) and later his son Barak (1792), fled to Al-Muntafiq territories, strengthening the anti-Saudi coalition

Thuwaini launched another campaign, advancing toward the region of Al-Saman. However, this time the Saudis reacted quickly. Saud bin Abdulaziz led a rapid-response force and intercepted the invading army. A fierce battle followed, ending in a decisive Saudi victory. The forces of Al-Muntafiq and their allies, including elements of the Al-Shabib tribe, were defeated and forced into retreat. The Saudis capitalized on this success by seizing the enemy encampments, supplies, and livestock, delivering both a material and symbolic blow to their opponents. By 1794, the momentum had shifted clearly in favor of Diriyah. In that year, Saud bin Abdulaziz launched another offensive targeting the Dhafir tribes in the Al-Hajrah region along the Iraqi frontier. This campaign demonstrated that the First Saudi State had moved beyond defending Najd; it was now capable of subjugation power deep into southern Iraq.

With the consolidation of Al-Ahsa, the Saudis gained a strategic advantage, placing them in a strong position to challenge both Al-Muntafiq and the Mamluk authorities of Iraq directly.

The third and most ambitious campaign came in 1797, under increasing pressure from the Ottoman center. The expansion of the Saudi state had begun to threaten pilgrimage routes and regional stability, prompting Selim III to demand action. Reports from Ghalib bin Musa'id warned of the growing Wahhabi threat, leading the Ottoman government to task Suleiman Pasha the Great with confronting it. Unable or unwilling to lead the campaign personally due to age and political constraints, Suleiman Pasha delegated the mission once again to Thuwaini. In return, Thuwaini was reinstated as emir of Al-Muntafiq and provided with vast resources: money, camels, horses, and military supplies. Thuwaini declared a general mobilization. Tribes from Al-Muntafiq, Al-Zubair, Basra, and the Dhafir confederation gathered, forming a massive army. He spent three months preparing his forces before marching south. Early encounters were successful, with Saudi-aligned groups defeated and large quantities of

livestock captured reportedly over 100,000 sheep sent to Basra The army advanced to Kuwait (Al-Jahra), where additional reinforcements from Bahrain and Al-Zubair joined. The force was then divided A Kuwaiti naval-supported contingent transported supplies toward Qatif The main army marched toward Al-Ahsa, aiming to secure it as a logistical base before advancing deeper into Najd

Meanwhile, Saudi forces under Muhammad bin Mu'ayqil initially withdrew, buying time until reinforcements arrived from Diriyah under Hassan bin Mishari

Thuwaini advanced to Al-Shabak, preparing for a decisive move possibly even toward Diriyah itself. In response, Saud bin Abdulaziz mobilized and strategically positioned his forces near key water sources, denying the العراقي army access an essential tactic in desert warfare At the critical moment, disaster struck. On June 28, 1797, while encamped at Al-Shabak, Thuwaini was assassinated by a servant named Tu'ays, reportedly affiliated with Bani Khalid. He was stabbed from behind and died instantly His death triggered chaos within the Campaign Leadership fractured immediately Allied tribes, including Bani Khalid under Barak al-Sardah, defected or withdrew the Saudi seized the opportunity. Saudi forces launched night raids on the collapsing camp, killing fleeing soldiers and capturing massive quantities of equipment Artillery pieces and Thousands of camels

The retreat turned into a disaster. Survivors fled toward Kuwait, many dying in the desert from hunger, thirst, or attacks by pro-Saudi tribes

The failure of the 1797 campaign had profound consequences In Baghdad, the death of Thuwaini caused panic, as he had been the عثماني's most capable tribal commander against the Saudis Attempts to reorganize the campaign under his brother Nasser failed Suleiman Pasha the Great abandoned plans for further large-scale offensives Saudi forces gained confidence and momentum They launched counter-raids into southern Iraq, including attack on Souq al-Shuyukh The campaigns of Thuwaini bin Abdullah represent the most serious early Ottoman-aligned attempts to

crush the First Saudi State. Yet, despite their scale and initial successes, they ultimately failed

The Campaign of Ali al-Kahya and the Six-Year Truce (1798–1799)

The campaign of Ali Pasha al-Kahya in 1798 marked the third major Ottoman attempt to halt the expansion of the First Saudi State following the catastrophic failure of the campaigns of Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al-Saadoun. Coming in the immediate aftermath of Thuwaini's assassination and the collapse of his army in 1797, this new expedition was conceived in Baghdad as a decisive effort to restore Ottoman authority in eastern Arabia and secure the الطريق toward Diriyah.

The قتل of Thuwaini sent shockwaves through Baghdad and the Ottoman administration. Suleiman Pasha the Great, now fully aware of the scale of the Saudi threat, resolved to organize a more structured and heavily armed campaign. In 1798 (1213 AH), he entrusted command to his son-in-law and deputy, Ali Pasha al-Kahya. A large and diverse army was assembled consisting of 4,000–5,000 Janissaries, Artillery units, Large irregular tribal forces including: Shammar tribe under Faris ibn Muhammad al-Jarba, Al-Muntafiq Confederation under Hamoud bin Thamer, Tribes such as Al-‘Uqaylāt, Al-‘Ubayd, Al-Dhafir, Al-Bu‘ayj, Al-Zaqārīt, and others. Additional support from Al-Zubair and Basra.

The army was accompanied by tribal advisors, notably Muhammad Bek al-Shawi, who guided desert operations.

By early 1799, the army had reached Basra, then advanced through Al-Zubair, Al-Rawdatayn, and Kuwait (Al-Jahra). From there, they arranged transport ships from the ruler of Kuwait to move heavy equipment to Al-‘Uqayr. The حملة relied on 10,000 camels to carry water and supplies, highlighting the immense logistical challenge of desert warfare.

The Advance into Al-Ahsa The strategic goal of the campaign was clear: capture Al-Ahsa, use it as a base, advance toward Diriyah. Initially the

Iraqis achieved notable progress They managed to occupy several Saudi positions across Al-Ahsa. However, key strongholds held firm like Al-Mubarraz under Suleiman bin Muhammad bin Majid with Zayd ibn Mansur in Hofuf fortress and Qatif fortress commanded by Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan

The Ottomans laid heavy sieges, particularly on Al-Mubarraz and Qatif. The siege of Qatif reportedly lasted two months (Feb–Apr 1799). Despite bombardment, the Ottoman artillery proved inadequate against fortified defenses At the same time tribal allies under Hamoud al-Saadoun launched raids into Najd including attacks on the Subay tribe capturing livestock to sustain the الجيش. While these raids provided temporary relief they did not alter the strategic balance Despite early gains, the campaign began to unravel due to internal mistreatment and communication Severe supply shortages as provisions ran low Loss of camels, crippling transport and water supply Poor leadership by Ali al-Kahya, especially his strained relations with tribal allies Ineffective artillery that failed to breach major fortifications As conditions worsened, soldiers demanded withdrawal. The army began abandoning or even burying heavy weapons due to inability to transport them. Meanwhile, Saudi forces adopted a classic desert

Saud bin Abdulaziz advanced from Diriyah He cut off northern routes Ordered the salting of wells near Hofuf to deny water access This maneuver placed the Ottoman army in a dangerous position isolated, exhausted, and increasingly vulnerable As the Ottomans retreated toward Al-Shabak and then Thaj, Saudi forces intercepted them. Skirmishes occurred decisive victory for the Saudis Which forced Ali al-Kahya

To negotiations with the Saudis demands of Ali al-Kahya included Saudi withdrawal from Al-Ahsa Safe treatment of Iraqi pilgrims Return of captured Ottoman artillery Payment of compensation However, these demands were unrealistic given the Ottoman position. Saud bin Abdulaziz rejected most of them, reportedly dismissing Al-Ahsa as “not worth mention” from the Ottoman perspective an indirect assertion of Saudi السيطرة. Ultimately, through mediation by tribal leaders, both sides agreed to

a six-year non-aggression pact. The Ottomans were allowed to withdraw with limited loss of face, while the Saudis secured recognition of their de facto control over eastern Arabia. An envoy from Diriyah even accompanied the Ottoman forces back to Baghdad to formalize the agreement. The campaign ended in failure for the Ottomans, despite its scale and preparation. The Campaign of Ali al-Kahya represents the last major Ottoman attempt in this phase (1786–1799) to directly confront the First Saudi State through Iraq.

Saudi Raids in Ottoman Iraq (1799–1811)

The fragile peace that followed the 1798 agreement between Saud bin Abdulaziz and Ali Pasha quickly unraveled, plunging the Iraqi frontier into one of the most intense and sustained phases of conflict between the First Saudi State and Ottoman Iraq. The immediate spark came in 1799, when the Shi'a Khaza'il tribe attacked Saudi-aligned groups near Najaf, killing hundreds. Diriyah demanded compensation, but negotiations failed, deepening hostility. For the Saudi leadership, this incident justified renewed military action. In 1802, Saudi forces launched their most infamous raid, striking Karbala. The city was stormed, and key religious sites including the shrine of Imam حسين بن علي were destroyed. The attack sent shockwaves across the Islamic world, provoking outrage from both the Ottomans and the Qajar Persians. Tensions escalated further in 1803 with the assassination of Abdulaziz bin Muhammad inside Diriyah. The assassin, reportedly from either Baghdad or Karbala, carried out the killing during Friday prayer, stabbing the Imam at close range. His death marked a turning point. His son, Saud, immediately assumed leadership and adopted a far more aggressive posture, framing the conflict as both revenge and expansion.

He raided the Dhafir tribe, who were scattered in the desert during the spring season, and plundered them. Then he headed towards Basra, storming and pillaging it, destroying the southern side and killing many. He then raided a group from the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq who were near Basra, killing some of them and capturing their leader, Mansur bin Thamer.

Al-Saadoun. After that, he besieged Al-Zubair for twelve days storming it and killing many of its inhabitants. The Saudis harvested the crops, which had ripened, and then they demolished all the tombs and shrines such as the shrine of Talha bin Al-Zubair and Al-Hasan Al-Basri. Then they returned to Diriyah.

A Wahhabi Army attacked Najaf in 1803 but with no success. In 1804 Saud bin Abdulaziz and Ibrahim bin Ufaysan led an army to attack Iraq, overrunning neighborhoods of Zubayr and Basra. Saud defeated the powerful Dhafir tribe, which had attempted to resist his authority. A Wahhabi Army led by Zaid bin Mishari and Turki bin Hamad attacked Khaza'il tribe in Diwaniyah. Defeating them in late 1804, Ali Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, led a major campaign after two years of preparation for a retaliatory strike against the Wahhabi capital, Diriyah. This was one of the largest campaigns assembled in the region during that period, with an estimated 50,000 regular troops and 25,000 reservists.

The army successfully advanced from Baghdad to Hilla. Initially, the march was relatively easy, but the difficulty of transporting heavy artillery across the sandy terrain began to take its toll. Furthermore, the killing of the Imam of Muscat in late 1804 by Wahhabi forces in Oman deprived Ali Pasha of a crucial naval and desert ally.

Nevertheless, in early 1805, an advance force of 400 men under Suleiman Bey reached the village of Ain Said. When he discovered that the inhabitants were Wahhabis, he intended to execute them in revenge for the 1802 attack on Karbala. However, the guide, Faris al-Jarba, intervened, explaining that the inhabitants had become "Wahhabis by force" due to their isolation in the open desert. They were pardoned, but the vanguard was forced to retreat quickly to Hilla due to a severe water shortage. After the vanguard's withdrawal, Ali Pasha sent successive waves of troops into the desert, but these subsequent campaigns were disastrous. Several detachments were ambushed and cut off by Wahhabi fighters, and the heavy artillery became an immobile burden in the deep sand. Ultimately, Ali Pasha abandoned the campaign and returned to Baghdad in despair.

Sharif Pasha and Abdullah Pasha followed him, but they met the same fate, their forces being defeated one after another or collapsing without a fight. This failure tipped the scales in favor of the Saudis as the enormous efforts and resources expended by Baghdad yielded no territorial or political gains after the campaign the Wahhabis later besieged and pillaged Nasiriyah in 1805 Saudi forces under Imam Saud reached Najaf before dawn, surrounding the city. The Saudi troops attempted to scale the walls using ladders made of palm trunks. Despite fierce fighting and the raising of Saudi banners over parts of the city, the forces were ultimately forced to withdraw due to stiff resistance from the garrison of the governor of Baghdad. On their return journey, the Saudi forces attacked the Khaza'il tribe and achieved several military victories in those areas. On his return to Diriyah, Imam Saud's army passed through Basra, where they were confronted by Hamoud bin Thamer, the Sheikh of the Muntafiq. Despite the element of surprise, Imam Saud took a firm stance and ultimately forced the Muntafiq forces to retreat before continuing his journey to the Saudi capital

The Wahhabis besieged and sacked Al-Najaf in 1806 Abdallah bin Saud let the military campaign into Iraq. They targeted the city of Karbala in 1808 But they were rerouted by Shia forces but successfully raided Samawa and Zubayr. In 1808 Saud mustered an immense force of 45,000 troops and marched toward Baghdad, managing to storm the city's southern side and defeat the enemy before withdrawing back to Najd 5,000 Wahhabis. They seized the fortress of Al-Jufair, which overlooks the Euphrates River, and decisively annihilated an army of Suleyman Pasha Saud then attacked the fortress of Al-Siraj

The new Pasha of Baghdad attempted to counter the Saudi expansion in late 1809 by sending a regular army and Iraqi Bedouins. Though they penetrated a short distance, they were defeated in the Battle of Tufair by the Saudi-loyal Anaza and Zafir tribes The campaigns concluded with a major offensive in 1810 led by Abdallah bin Saud Abdallah's forces pushed north, attacking Al Diwaniyah, breaking through its defenses, and plundering a sector of the city. A small Iraqi field force led by Hasan

Al-Karimi was attacked and Al-Karimi was killed. Abdallah continued the campaign Battle of Al Azizyah A large force from Baghdad was dispatched to halt the Wahhabi campaign, meeting Abdallah's army at Al Aziziyah. Abdallah's forces emerged victorious, reaching the vicinity of Baghdad and attacking Hillah where they achieved successful victory in 1810 The year 1811 Saudi Officers tax collectors have been Send to Southern Iraq I'm collecting tribute by the 1812 a Wahhabi army Attacked and defeated Khaza'il tribe led by Faris bin Mashari Al-Juraid

marked a high point in Wahhābī expansion, as their de facto control encompassed a vast sweep of territory in southern Iraq. Their sphere of influence was such that it effectively reached the Ottoman administrative center of Baghdad The Saudi State successfully expanded its circle of influence annexing the lands west of the Euphrates River from Ana to Basra to its territory, and intermittently collected zakat (Islamic tax) from the southern Iraqi tribes The ultimate failure of the Iraqi governors to defeat the First Saudi State in this prolonged war prompted the Ottoman state to shift strategy, eventually requesting the powerful governor of Egypt to intervene militarily against the Wahhabis

The Hijaz and Southern Expansion

By the turn of the 19th century, the First Saudi State had already secured much of Najd and expanded into eastern Arabia and the Gulf. The next phase of its growth turned west and south, toward some of the most politically sensitive and symbolically powerful regions in the Islamic world. Chief among these was the Hijaz, home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which were under the authority of the Sharif of Mecca and, by extension, the Ottoman Empire.

Saudi conquest of Hijaz

The Saudi expanse within Najd itself had not gone unnoticed in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula; in Al-Hijāz the Sharifian rulers had come to see the domination the Salafi Da'wah had been taking. Al-Hijāz being the stretch of territory running parallel to the red sea from the borders of Ash-Shām down to 'Asir and Tihāmah. The importance of Al-Hijāz was due to the fact it was where the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah were located, which were at the time under Ottoman' suzerainty between the two sides had been during the rule of Muhammad bin Sa'ūd himself when the then Sharif Mas'ūd bin Sa'id prohibited the people of Najd from performing the Hajj and generally forbade them from entering

Makkah. He sought from Ad-Dir'iyyah that they send some of their scholars in order to discuss/contest with the Scholars of Makkah. The discussions passed without any conformity from either side.¹⁶⁸

Communications were opened up again between Makkah and Ad-Dir'iyyah during the Sharifate of Ahmed bin Sa'id around 1185H (1771CE) who sent a request to Imam 'Abdul-'Aziz bin Muhammad bin Saud and Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhab to send a scholar in order to clarify to him and the scholars of Al-Hijaz; the basis of the Salafi Da'wah. This was followed up with the sending of Shaikh 'Abdul-'Aziz Al-Hussain⁶⁹ along with letters and gifts to Sharif Ahmed bin Sa'id as a reply to his initial letter. They both (Imām 'Abdul-'Aziz and Shaikh-ul-Islām) laid out an explanation in their letters of the nature of the Da'wah in Ad-Dir'iyyah in trying to convince the Sharif that what they were calling to was nothing new, and that the Sharif was amongst the most rightful of people to stand with them since they were reviving the Islamic teachings which had come from his very own forefather (line of ancestry).

The letters which came from Ad-Dir'iyyah made it clear that they were from the helpers of the Sharif. The scholars sent from Ad-Dir'iyyah reached Makkah and gathered with its scholars whereupon discussions were conducted concerning the Da'wah. However; yet again an agreement could not be reached between the two sides or conformity between Ad-Dir'iyyah and Makkah.⁷⁰

Sharif Ahmed bin Said continued the ban on the people of Najd from performing the Hajj. After the end of the term of Sharif Ahmed, Ad-Dir'iyyah sent a request to the new Sharif Surur bin Musaid who ruled from 1186H (1772CE) asking for permission for the people of Najd in order to perform the Hajj. A condition was imposed upon them which was that a tax/levy be taken from them in order to do so. The Saudis refused and so no one from the people of Najd performed the Hajj during the tenure of Sharif Surür except in secret.

Contact was kept between the Saudis and the Ashrāf for the next twenty years, however sluggish, with no agreement between the two sides. This was until the Sharifate came under the reign of Sharif Ghālib bin Musā'id in the year 1202H (1787CE) who engaged in an era of conspicuous dally in Saudi-Hijāzi relations. It was during his reign that relations between the two sides began to take a new turn which was to lead to a head-on conflict between the two sides and result in Saudi domination and absorbing Al-Hijāz into their realm. The Ottoman State had until this time regarded Al-Hijāz as being from its own domains, therefore it would be inevitable that any challenge to the control of the region would attract the attention of the Porte' itself, which was shortly to occur.

Accordingly the relationship between the Saudi State and the Ottoman government did not become clear until the start of the thirteenth century after the Hijrah when the Najdis began expanding their domains outside of Najd with the conquest of Al-Ahsa in 1198H. News had already been spreading of the movement throughout the Peninsula with some of the scholars of Al-Ahsā seeking to refute the principles of the Da'wah of Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhāb, this effort found particular exertion at the time with a number of scholars in the region seeking to rebut the Da'wah.

Therefore, the news of the Da'wah had spread early on in Al-Ahsa and Al-Basrah, and with the spread of the news to Al-Basrah it consequently reached the Ottomans due to Al-Basrah being an Ottoman vassal. It is true also that the news of the Dawah had reached the Ottomans early on

through the Sharif of Makkah who had informed the Sultān of the emergence of Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhāb in Najd and that his Da'wah was in opposition to what they themselves were upon - and this was in the year 1163H. The judges and the Scholars of both Makkah and Madinah wrote letters to the Ottoman Sultān warning him of the danger of the

'Wahhabi' emergence - as they claimed. Their letters were then observed by the legislative body at Istanbul who responded stating that the issue between them and the Najdis was nothing more than a war of words and a difference in the interpretation of texts beyond which there was no danger posed by them upon the Ottoman State itself. Upon studying some of the letters of the Sharif some of the members of the congress even made the accusation that 'the Sharif of Makkah requests military assistance from the Sultān in order to actualise his own desire to expand his domains into Najd itself.' This being the initial recognition the Ottomans had of the Najdis, however it was not the direct reason for the enmity of the Ottomans against the Saudi State. For as long as the Saudi State remained within its domains of Najd it did not bother the Ottomans in any way, it was as though it was not an Islamic country over which the 'Khilāfah' had any responsibility. This further supports the fact that Najd was never from the provinces of the Ottoman State itself. A point worthy of mention is that this era began when Najd itself had become unified under Saudi control, their military expeditions had reached the Arabian Gulf and the Salafi Da wah had been spreading within Al-Hijāz itself amongst some of the Arabs. Sharif Ghalib had heard of the successes the Saudis were having against the people of Al-Ahsa and the Bani-Khalid along with depictions of just how powerful Ad-Dir'iyyah had become. Seeing the 'danger' his dominion was facing, he started his era in the same way as his predecessors did; sending a letter to Imām 'Abdul-'Aziz and Shaikh Muhammad bin Abdil-Wahhāb in the year 1204H (1789CE) requesting from them that they send one of the scholars of the Da wah to clarify to him the reality of it. Shaikh 'Abdul-'Aziz who was sent in the era of Sharif Ahmed was again dispatched to carry out the same task. Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhāb sent with him a book to Sharif Ghālib giving a summary of his Dawah and that he and his followers were

adhering to the madhab of Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal - and that they were not a group of innovators as they had been portrayed by their enemies

Upon reaching Makkah; Shaikh 'Abdul-'Aziz met with Sharif Ghalib on a number of occasions explaining and clarifying the principles of the Salafi Da'wah. Then he requested from the Sharif that he come with the scholars of Makkah in order that he debate with them and clarify to them the reality of the Da'wah also. The scholars of Makkah however refused; suggesting to the Sharif that the Saudis only wanted to cease the influence of his fathers and forefathers saying: "this group having nothing with them other than wanting to cease the methodology of your fathers and forefathers and to take your hand off what comes to you by way of good

The visit yet again ended on this occasion with no real agreement between the two sides. However, the incitement of the scholars of Makkah of Sharif Ghālib had inevitably flared enmity between the Ashrāf and the Saudis

The Saudi meanwhile were concentrating their military efforts in the east having no objective in the western region where hijaz lays yet it was the Ashraf who initiated hostilities and compelled the Saudis into confrontation with what to face this Beginning of the year 1790 at a time when the Ashraf had begun a campaign of assaults in many Najdi areas, whilst the Saudis sufficed with blocking the attacks of the Ashrāf and their incursions. Sharif Ghālib at this time had the ability to assemble a very great force comprised of people from the towns and villages of Al-Hijāz along with some of the tribes which had left Najd to side with the Ashrāf such as the Mutair. Sharif Ghalib sent a great army and placed his brother Abdul-Aziz at its head in order to strike at Najd. The undisclosed army reached the fortress of Bassām - a Saudi fortress in the area whilst having reached it unnoticed." The siege began, and went on for four months, however the attackers could not take the fort, despite some sources mentioning that the fort had held no more than twenty men within it.¹⁷⁸

The Saudis had concentrated their efforts in the eastern region, in particular Al-Ahsa where their operations were in the last stages against the Bani Khālid who had been weakened to a large degree. In reality; the

Saudis had grown in strength to an extent far greater than that of their enemies; and so they were able to check the military operations of the Ashrāf in the western region (which had no success against Ad-Dir'iyyah) whilst engaging against the Al-Ahsā region in the east - simultaneously.

After this, Sharif Ghālib himself set out at the head of a great army in order to reinforce and bolster the force of his brother, he then tried to win over the populous of Wadi Ad-Dawāsir. Joined by the tribes of Mutair, Qahtn and Shammar, they tried yet again to attack the Najdi areas at a mountain around the well of Al-'Adwah near the town of Hā'il. 179

Sharif Ghalib had come to see that his efforts against the Najdi regions had come to no avail. It was nearly the Hajj season in the year 1205H (1790CE) and he had begun to fear that the Porte may seize Makkah and give the Sharifate to one of the sons of his own uncles from the Ashrāf due to the State's discontent with him. His era of making offensives into Najd had also come to an end; from now on his campaigns were either to be defensive or against those he deemed weak and easier to overcome.

Meanwhile the Saudis were out disciplining the tribes in the areas where they had sided with the Ashrāf during the offensives into Najd. Sa'ūd bin

'Abdil-'Aziz was in general command and it was he who was conducting these operations in these areas

It is about this time that Shaikh-ul-Islām Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhāb (alias) passed away. After a time when Allah had shown him the fruits of his efforts in calling to Him. His Da wah was on the fringes of taking Al-Hijaz and had reached the entire east of the Peninsula.¹⁸¹ The death of the Sheriff

Meanwhile Sharif Ghālib sent correspondence to the Porte informing them of the issue of emergence of the 'Wahhābis.¹⁸³ He sent As-Sayyid

Muhsin bin 'Abdillāh Al-Hamawi and As-Sayyid Hussain the Mufti of the Mälikis with his message. However they (the Ottomans) gave no consideration to this nor did they pay any regard to it. This stance no doubt had a great effect in the enfeeblement of the Sharifs own position. The effect was due to the Ottoman state; because until that time it had not regarded the Saudis as a danger nor were they aware of the extent to which their strength had reached. Alongside their being preoccupied with their own problems both internally as well as externally

The preoccupations of the Porte did not allow it at the time to send its troops to fight the Saudi State. For it was busy putting down the uprisings in Belgrade as well as the Serbian rebellion in Serbia itself. Likewise it found itself dealing with the French occupation of Egypt and the Russian invasions in neighbouring lands as well as the British expedition on the Dardanelles and later in Egypt in 1222H (1807CE)

The year was 1209H (1794CE) Amir Saüd was conducting military operations, in doing so he managed to reach near the town of Turbah besieging the villages and towns in the area. His efforts were intensified which led to some of the villages to seek a truce as well as declaring their submission to Ad-Dir'iyyah. Despite the successes he had in the Hijāzi areas he did not proceed beyond this point. The way ahead deeper into Al-Hijāz was open before him; however, he chose to return to Ad-Dir'iyyah. Sharif Ghalib responded to the successes of Sa'üd by preparing an army at the head of which was Sharif Nasir bin Yahya. The expedition reached an area known as the well of Al-Jumaniyyah in the upper reaches of Najd - except that the Saudi forces there defeated the army, causing it heavy losses.

Then in the year 1211H (1796CE) Imām 'Abdul-'Aziz ordered the Saudi commander Rabi bin Zaid - Amir of Ad-Dawāsir to conduct operations in Hijāzi territory. His attacks defeated some of the Bedouin in the area and he moved on to Bayshah where he inflicted yet more defeat upon the region entering them into the submission of Ad-Dir'iyyah. The successes were having a great effect upon the locals in these Hijāzi regions, for they

were seeking peace with whichever force was strongest at the time and showed itself to be more powerful. As a consequence of the operations the stance of Sharif Ghālib had evidently faltered and was weakened. What added to his exasperation was that the tribes which had until now helped him in opposing and fighting Ad-Dir'iyyah such as the Mutair and Qahtān and Utaybah and other than them saw no advantage in fighting the Saudi forces and so sought peace from Imām 'Abdul-'Aziz and declared their submission to the Saudis. Meanwhile, Sharif Ghālib was making an abundance of letter writing to the Porte - receiving in response no help whatsoever; at the same time he feared that the Ottoman Sultān would dismiss him from his position. Along with that; supplies and requirements had fallen short in the Sharifs possession; furthermore, the Hijāzi economy was now suffering due to the incursions the Saudis were making on the main routes which led to Makkah, Al-Madinah and At-Ta'if.

In 1212H (1797CE) Sharif Ghālib sent Shaikh Ahmed At-Turki to the Ottoman State to raise his plight and seek assistance, the State again gave no response, nor gave importance to what was being said. So instead Sharif Ghalib began fighting the Hijazi tribes which had declared their allegiance to the Saudis in the hope of bringing them back to his loyalty once again.

The fighting he was occupied in against the tribes gave the Saudis the opportunity to spread out in varying regions of Al-Hijāz and concentrate their efforts in many parts at the same time. The Saudi commander Rabi' bin Zaid continued his offensive in Bayshah against the Sharifian army causing it much destruction and material losses. Things got so desperate for the Sharif that he himself set out with an army to face the Saudis who were now closing in on the major cities. He again incurred substantial losses in this expedition losing wealth and man power, choosing instead to return to Makkah. The exasperated Sharif had incurred enormous losses; he was weakened militarily due to his continued failures, in particular after his defeat at Al-Khurmah where he lost a vast amount of his fighting force. Many of the Hijazi tribes around Makkah had joined the Saudis which had affected his own political power and restricted his

movement The ill nature of the Hijāzi economy was a direct result of the military expeditions and its failures and the varying regions now paying their taxes

to the Saudis instead of the Sharif as they had done before - affecting the economy. Added to this the Saudis had come across the Sharifian treasury at Al-Khurmah which had accompanied the Sharif; so there was no more revenue to fund further operations. The Ottomans too had given him nothing; instead they sent him an order to fortify the Haramain and reinforce the city walls of Jeddah for fear of the French advancing on the Hijāz after their invasion of Egypt and The Saudi forces invasions

The Sharif therefore called for a truce In Jamādil-Ulā(1798)after correspondence between the two sides, a truce was agreed between Sharif Ghālib and 'Abdul-'Aziz. Contained within it was an outline of areas and tribes under the rule of each side making it clear where the territory of both sides lay. The people of Najd were allowed to perform the Hajj once again after they had been prevented from doing so for such a long time

During the course of the truce some of the tribes of Al-Hijāz (previously loyal to the Sharif) continued to accept the Salafi Da'wah and so pledged allegiance with Ad-Dir'iyyah. Along with the fact that Saudi influence was spreading fast in Tihāmah and 'Asir and in northern Yemen where the Saudi forces were having successes Sharif Ghālib accused the Saudis of violating the truce through influencing some of the tribes to defect to their side, along with this he accused them of spreading bad sentiments amongst the tribes against him. He sent a delegation to Ad-Dir'iyyah in order to discuss the problem, at the head of the delegation he sent Uthmān bin 'Abdir-Rahman Al-Mudayafi; his own brother-in-law. The delegation met Abdul-Aziz in Ad-Dir'iyyah, the complaints which were levelled were listened to whereupon 'Abdul-'Aziz gave them his word that he would look into the issues which the Sharif has raised in order to resolve them. However; upon the delegations return to Makkah the situation between the two sides began to worsen, as a result this turned

their relationship to what it had been before the truce. Ad-Dir'iyah also placed a limit on the powers of disposal of the Sharif, added to this his brother in law 'Uthmān bin 'Abdir-Rahmān Al-Mudāyafi, who had been his minister as well as the Shaikh of the Adwān tribe around At-Ta'if - declared his allegiance to the Saudis, with some references citing a difference which had arisen between the two men. The defection of 'Uthmān had a great effect upon those who were still with the Sharif, for when 'Uthmān returned to Al-Hijāz, many Hijazi tribes declared their termination of loyalty from the Sharif. 'Uthmān sent a message to Ad-Dir'iyah asking for assistance and help against the Sharif Ghalib. An order was sent from Ad-Dir'iyah to its commander in Bayshah and Raniyyah to proceed to the aid of 'Uthman.

In 1802 the force arrived at At-Ta'if and after a sudden attack upon it managed to capture it. Sharif Ghalib had been there and subsequently fled in the direction of Makkah with his Forces. In 1803 the Saudis arrived with a great force under the leadership of Amir Sa'ūd; the force which had taken At-Ta'if had come to join him. Combined together they rode in the direction of Makkah in order to take the city and finally expel the Sharif from it. Meanwhile the beleaguered Sharif was trying to persuade the Shāmi, Egyptian and Moroccan pilgrims as well as the Imām of Muscat, of the Omani empire who was in Makkah to help him make war against the Saudis and to stand with him. However; in the end they desired to return safely to their lands, so chose not to side with him in order to wage war against the Saudis who were now surrounding Makkah.

The garrison of Turkish soldiers abandoned Makkah for Jeddah, and the Sharif - who had no way of standing against the Saudi forces - also left for Jeddah, leaving the way open for Amir Sa'ūd to enter Makkah and declare a general amnesty for all its people. The precepts of the Salafi Da wah were put into immediate effect in the city. The domes which had been built over the graves were levelled, the shrines were likewise demolished. The book; Kashf Ash-shubuhāt of Shaikh Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhāb was ordered to be studied in the Mosques - and to be attended by the scholars as well as the locals.

Upon taking the city Imām Sa'ud also sought to rectify some of the more important matters pertaining to the sanctity of the city as well as of the welfare of the people.

A general edict was also issued enjoining the people to perform the acts of worship such as the Hajj and Umrah correctly in accordance to the Prophetic Sunnah in order for it to be valid and accepted free of Shirk and innovations. After the administration for the city was put into place the Saudis moved on in the direction of Jeddah to lay siege to the city where Sharif Ghālib was. However; the siege was unsuccessful due to the recent reinforcement of its city walls, so Sa'ūd ordered the siege be lifted and after organizing his forces at Makkah and seeing to its garrison he returned to Ad-Diriyyah leaving the affairs of Makkah to an administrator placed there by the Saudis. Sharif Ghalib took advantage of the opportunity, seeing that the main Saudi force had left Makkah he hastened in taking it and so returned to it later the same year. News of the Sharifs return to the city reached Ad-Dir'iyyah at the same time the Saudi rulership passed into the hands of Sa'ud following his fathers' assassination. As a result of the ongoing Hijāzi struggle the new ruler ordered the construction of a military fort in Wadi Fātimah near Makkah in order to keep the activities of the Sharif under observation whilst taking counteractive measures against the city in order to tighten the grip around the Sharifs neck until he surrendered. The fortress's construction in Wadi Fātimah was completed in 1220H (1805CE), Amir Sa'ud ordered 'Abdul-Wahhāb bin 'Amir - the Amir of 'Asir and the Tihamah regions to proceed to Jeddah in order to fight its people.! After defeating the forces of the Sharif again, all Saudi forces were told to move in on Makkah, the city was surrounded, blockading all routes to and from it. This had a massive economic affect on the city and so hunger spread amongst the populous and great difficulty manifested itself. The residents preferred to side with the Saudis as opposed to the continued siege, along with the fact that there was no fighting force with which to fight them with. Many of the Ashrāf at this point made allegiance

to the Saudis, Sharif Ghalib seeing again that he had no way of standing in the way called for a truce. He agreed to enter under the obedience of the Imām of Ad-Dir'iyah and remain in his position of Amir of Makkah - and so a truce was agreed between the two sides. As a result, the Saudi forces entered Makkah and all routes to the city were re-opened settling the city's economy once more. The Sharif had agreed to become an Amir under Saudi jurisdiction, however; his actions which followed gave rise to suspicion on behalf of the Saudis of the Sharifs intentions for two main reasons Firstly; he had retained Turkish, Moroccan and other troops from abroad there and ordered their organisation under Ottoman prerequisite. Later the same year (1220H), the Saudis took over Al-Madinah, the judges of the city, as well as its scholars and notable citizens wrote a declaration to Imām Sa'ūd giving him the pledge of allegiance and sending it with a delegation to Ad-Dir'iyah. Imām Sa'ūd himself did not come to Al-Madinah until the following year after he had secured terms of peace with Sharif Ghālib. The following year in 1221H (1806CE), there came an order from Ad-Dir'iyah which prevented the Mahmal from coming through from Ash-Shām, Istanbul, Egypt and Iraq. The Mahmal was turned back this year after it had reached the vicinity of Al-Madinah; Imām Sa'ūd himself performed the Hajj and ordered any remaining Turkish troops to leave Makkah. Any Turkish judges were expelled from Makkah and Al-Madinah and a general declaration was made that any Ottoman affiliation be eradicated from the Haramain. During the early part of the Saudi annexation of Al-Madinah the treasures and valuables contained within the Hujrah Ash-Sharifah became the focus of attention in regards to their utilization for the welfare of the populace of the city during this time, due to the immediate needs which had arisen.

The taking of the treasures from the Hujrah Ash-Sharifah is a criticism often levelled at Imām Sa'ūd for his alleged having done. It is a criticism by the opponents of Tawhid devised solely to taint and underscore the conduct of the First Saudi State in Al-Madinah during their hold on the city at the time, as well as to disseminate a general revulsion throughout the Muslim world at the event along with the insinuation of the disrespect the people of Tawhid have toward the religion. Friday sermons to be

conducted in his name not that of the Ottoman Sultan. He then replaced the Kiswah (cover of the Kaaba) with one made in Diriyah, marking the symbolic culmination of Wahhabi dominance over the holy cities. Though the conquest of the Hijaz marked a significant high point for the First Saudi State, it also drew the attention and wrath of the Ottoman Empire. The occupation of the two holiest cities by a movement viewed as rebellious and heretical eventually provoked the Ottomans.

The Advance into Asir and Yemen

Following their consolidation of the Hijaz, the leaders of Diriyah pushed further south into the rugged and politically fragmented regions of 'Asir and Yemen. Unlike the more direct conquests in Najd or al-Ahsa, this phase of expansion relied on a mixture of alliances, religious influence, and selective military intervention. The region was deeply divided, with competing tribal rulers and weakening central authorities, creating an *فرصة* for Saudi influence to spread.

In 'Asir, the rising power of Abd al-Wahhab Abu Nuqta aligned with the Wahhabi movement, bringing much of the region into the Saudi sphere. Meanwhile, the emirate of Abu Arish, ruled by Hamud Abu Mismar, also submitted though more as an ally than a fully controlled subject. These alliances allowed the Saudis to extend their reach south of Mecca without committing to full occupation.

The situation in Yemen further favored expansion. The authority of the Zaidi Imams had weakened, particularly along the coastal Tihama region, which had already slipped from their firm control. Taking advantage of this instability, Saudi-led forces launched campaigns into key *المناطق*. In 1805–1806, a decisive Saudi victory was achieved in Najran, securing an important frontier zone between Arabia and Yemen. From there, Saudi commanders including Tami bin Shuaib and Bakhrosh ibn A'llas expanded operations into the Yemeni lowlands. The port city of Hodeida changed hands multiple times, reflecting its strategic importance on the Red Sea coast. Other towns, such as Samtah, were captured and became centers

for the spread of Wahhabi teachings, with religious missions sent regularly to consolidate influence. Despite these gains, the mountainous interior of Yemen proved far more resistant. In 1808, Saudi forces advanced as far as Sanaa, even besieging the city. Although they achieved temporary success in surrounding it, they were unable to establish lasting control due to the *دفاعات المدينة* and the difficult terrain, which favored local resistance.

Tensions soon emerged among the Saudi-aligned rulers themselves. Rivalry between Hamud Abu Mismar and Abu Nuqta threatened to destabilize the *المنطقة*. Saud bin Abdulaziz attempted to mediate by summoning both leaders to Diriyah, but reconciliation failed. When Abu Mismar refused to follow Saudi directives particularly an order to attack Sanaa he was viewed as defiant.

In response, Saud mobilized a large force, reportedly approaching 50,000 men, to reassert control. A decisive confrontation took place around 1809. Abu Nuqta was killed during the fighting, but Abu Mismar's coalition despite support from tribes in Najran and Yemen was ultimately defeated. He retreated to his stronghold in Abu Arish, where he fortified his position. Although Saudi forces failed to capture the city, they effectively neutralized his threat.

To restore stability, Saud appointed Tami bin Shuaib as the new authority in the region, ensuring continued Saudi influence over 'Asir and parts of Yemen. While they succeeded in extending influence across coastal and tribal *مناطق*, the difficult geography of Yemen and the *بيچيده* network of local rivalries prevented the establishment of full and lasting *السيطرة*.

Corancez Mission of 1803

In 1798, the Directory instructed Napoleon Bonaparte, on his way to Egypt, to "ensure the free and exclusive possession of the Red Sea to the Republic." The choice of Egypt reflected a slow maturation of relations between France and Islam, and not simply the goal of breaking British

control over India Fascinated by the Orient, Bonaparte read extensively on the subject before embarking on his seminal journey there. His interest in Arabia initially focused on the Red Sea basin with French navy

Napoleon Bonaparte showed keen interest in the rise of Saud bin Abdulaziz for his Eastern ambitions around 1799, according to a talk by Louis Blin on Napoleon's Egyptian campaign France's engagement with Arabia. Seeking to control the route to India and build an eastern empire, Napoleon turned his attention to the Red Sea and attempted to secure an alliance with the sharif of Makka. Unaware of emerging forces in Arabia, his army instead faced fierce Hijazi fighters in Upper Egypt. After returning to France in 1799

Bonaparte who knew Corancez well, entrusted him in 1803 with a diplomatic mission to the Saudi state Saud bin Abdulaziz which might have changed the course of Arabian history if it had not failed in extremis. The plethora of bibliography devoted to Napoleon passes over in silence this admittedly minor his diplomatic eclecticism and the persistence of his interest in the Orient long after the Egyptian campaign. At a time when the situation of Sharif Ghaleb Ibn Musa'id seemed desperate in Jeddah, besieged by Saud's army, Napoleon showed himself willing to change his tactics to secure support in the Red Sea and Arabia

Oman the Gulf, and International Intervention (1800–1816)

The opening years of the nineteenth century represented a period of unprecedented upheaval for the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. At the heart of this transformation was the convergence of three distinct forces: the relentless maritime ambition of the Al Bu Said dynasty in Muscat, the aggressive landward expansion of the First Saudi State, and the increasing anxiety of the British East India Company. Between 1800 and 1816, the relative isolation of the Persian Gulf vanished. The rise of the Wahhabi-Qawasim alliance challenged the established naval hierarchy.

Saudi invasion of Oman (1800-1816)

The expansion of the First Saudi State into the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula marked a pivotal shift in regional power dynamics. By the turn of the 19th century, the alliance between the House of Saud and

the reformist teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab had transformed from a local Nejd movement into a formidable expansionist power. In 1800, the Wahhabi forces marched toward the strategic Oasis of Buraimi. This location served as the gateway to both Oman and the Trucial Coast. The Omani garrison, unable to withstand the fervor and tactical mobility of the Nejd highlanders, was decisively defeated.

By planting a permanent governor in Buraimi, the Wahhabis established a forward military base that allowed them to dominate the surrounding territory. It was the establishment of a formal administration that demanded zakat (alms-tax) and adherence to their puritanical interpretation of Islam, fundamentally challenging the traditional Ibadism of the Omani interior.

The momentum continued into 1801, as the movement transitioned from border skirmishes to a full-scale invasion of Omani territories. The expedition was led by Salim al-Kharq, a prominent commander and one of the Mamelukes (military slaves-turned-officers) of Imam Abd al-Aziz.

Under al-Kharq's leadership, the Wahhabi army displayed the efficiency of a centralized military machine. Their success in Oman sent shockwaves through the coastal principalities. Successfully attacking Oman, Saqr captured the city, the ruler of the strategically important port and town of Ras al-Khaima, the centre of the Qawasim tribe.

Saqr swore formal allegiance to the Saudi Imam in al-Diriya, effectively placing the most powerful pirate and merchant fleet in the Persian Gulf under Wahhabi influence. This alliance gave the First Saudi State a "naval wing," allowing their influence to extend from the sands of the Nejd to the vital shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean.

With the Qawasim as allies, other small shajhdoms and emirates along the Gulf coast were rapidly subdued or opted for strategic submission to avoid total conquest. The traditional regional power, the Omani empire, found itself increasingly isolated. Omanis appealed for help from the French empire to fight against the Saudis. The French naval forces spent about a

year and a half under the command of the Omani authorities. They helped Sultān ibn Ahmed to strike a severe blow at the forces of al-Utub and the Wahhābis. Great Britain did not look favourably on this turn of events.

Omani-British relations at that time were in a state of extreme tension. By way of reprisal, England took steps, using severe economic pressures, to strangle the Omani economy and perhaps ultimately to weaken Sultān in Ahmed's position and against Oman, especially the fifth article which required the neutrality of Muscat in the event of war between France and England. For in that case England could suspend the export of the main foodstuffs like Indian rice to Oman, that is to say decree an economic blockade of the country.

Sultan bin Ahmad, soon found himself in a humiliating position of dependency. By 1803, he was effectively a vassal, his policies heavily influenced by the mandates coming from the Saudi capital of Diriyah.

In 1802 Salim bin Bilal al-Harq led an army into Oman marching under his Saudi banner. From the coast, the Qawasim and their allies joined him, and they marched to the Batinah coast. All the towns and villages surrendered to them until they reached the town of Shinas. There, the forces of Sultan bin Ahmed gathered and fought them. After a fierce battle, they conquered the Anaza region which fell under their control. From there, they marched to the town of Muttrah, besieged it, and it surrendered. They then returned to the Dhahirah region, which also surrendered. Some of them joined the Al Saud and united with them. Literally besieged Tarh. The fragility of the Omani leadership was laid bare in 1803. While Sultan bin Ahmad was away performing the Hajj in Mecca a journey that left the throne vulnerable his relative Badr bin Saif attempted a palace coup. The rebellion failed to take hold, and Badr was forced to flee. Tellingly, he did not seek refuge with other maritime powers or tribal allies; instead, he fled to al-Diriya. His exile to the Saudi capital underscored a new reality.

Sultan bin Ahmad recognized that Muscat could not survive in isolation. In a strategic pivot, the Sultan decided to strengthen his ties with the Pasha of Baghdad, whose emissaries had long been encouraging him to launch a

coordinated strike against their common enemy. Baghdad, representing the Ottoman interest in Iraq, viewed the Saudi expansion as a direct threat to their southern frontiers, creating a natural if distant alliance of convenience

However, diplomatic maneuvering could not halt the renewal of Wahhabi activity in Oman in 1804. The Nejd forces launched a daring raid into the Omani heartland, striking Rustaq. The assault was a resounding success for the Wahhabis; they overran the local defenses and captured the commander of the garrison Zahir bin Malik. This loss forced the Al Bu Said leadership into a desperate position. Sultan Sa'īd, seeking to regain the initiative, undertook a major naval campaign in the Gulf. It was a mission born of necessity and frustration. Despite his efforts to secure international backing, the Sultan found himself forced to rely on his own strength after receiving nothing but hollow promises of aid from the English

This failure set the stage for a tragedy that would alter the course of Omani history. Upon his return voyage to Muscat, Sultan Sa'īd was intercepted and attacked by three Qawāsim ships. In the heat of the naval engagement, the Sultan was hit by a bullet in the head and was killed, leaving a sudden and dangerous power vacuum in the Al Bu Said state

The House of Saud was quick to capitalize on this instability. The Sultan's relative Badr, who had been living in exile in al-Diriya and had fully integrated himself into the Saudi political sphere, saw his opportunity. Backed by the military and political weight of his Saudi protectors, Badr returned to Muscat. His arrival was not merely a homecoming but a calculated move to establish himself as the new ruler under the suzerainty of the Wahhabi state, effectively threatening to turn Oman into a satellite province of the Nejd empire. He retained power for some years and tried to inculcate the Wahhabi doctrine among the Omani population, attempting to shift the nation's spiritual center from its traditional Ibadism to the reformist teachings of al-Diriya. However, he met with little notable

success, as the local tribes and the merchant elite of Muscat remained deeply resistant to the austere mandates imposed from the Nejd.

The internal opposition soon found its leaders in the next generation of the Al Bu Said dynasty. In 1807, Sultan ibn Ahmad's sons rebelled against Badr's proxy rule. In a swift move to reclaim their father's legacy, they dethroned Badr, ending his attempts to integrate Oman into the Saudi religious sphere.

The transition of power brought Salim and later his brother Said to the throne. Initially, the new rulers played a cautious diplomatic game; they first observed obedience to the Saudis to buy time and prevent an immediate invasion. However, this was a strategic facade. As they consolidated their internal position, they eventually refused to pay the tribute and openly began preparations for hostilities. By 1806, even before the final break in tribute payments, the geopolitical shield of the Al Bu Said had weakened. The interior of Oman lay vulnerable to Wahhabi incursions, as the Saudi-led forces utilized their stronghold in Buraimi to launch devastating raids that bypassed coastal defenses

under the aggressive leadership of Mutlaq bin Muhammad Al-Mutairi, a commander renowned for his tactical brilliance and unwavering commitment to the Saudi cause. He launched a full-scale invasion of northern Oman, aiming to break the back of the Al Bu Said resistance once and for all. The Saudi juggernaut first made its presence felt on the Batinah Coast. Their first significant victory came in As Suwayq, where the speed of the Wahhabi cavalry overwhelmed local defenses. Following this momentum, the Saudi forces swept through Suhar, which stood as one of the Gulf's most vital and prosperous ports

By capturing Suhar, Mutlaq did more than just seize territory; he consolidated control over Oman's maritime links, effectively choking the trade routes that fueled the economy of Muscat. The removal of local resistance in such a key urban center signaled to the rest of the peninsula that the Wahhabi reach now extended from the deep desert to the very edge of the sea

Mutlaq then turned his attention toward the rugged interior, targeting symbols of Omani tribal strength. The Saudi forces besieged the formidable Nakhal Fort, a mountain bastion that had been long considered impregnable due to its strategic position at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar. Despite the strong walls and determined defenders, the Wahhabi assault prevailed. The fall of Nakhal served as a psychological blow to the Omani tribes, proving that even the most ancient mountain defenses could not withstand the Saudi advance.

The campaign of subjugation continued at Ibri, where a fierce battle broke out. Once again, Mutlaq's forces overwhelmed the tribal defenders, utilizing their superior mobility and the religious fervor of their troops. This victory allowed the Wahhabis to extend Saudi control deeper into the Jabal Akhdar region, bringing the high mountains and the fertile valleys of the interior under the administrative and religious umbrella of al-Diriya. By 1808, the First Saudi State had reached the height of its power in the southeast, leaving the Al Bu Said rulers clinging to a shrinking coastal strip

Said sought an unexpected ally to the north. By 1808, with the Saudi grip tightening, a royal physician advised the Sultan of Oman to look toward the Qājār Shah of Iran for military intervention. The timing was strategic; the Shah was predisposed to hostility toward the Saudi state following the devastating Wahhabi Sack of Karbalā' in Ottoman Iraq years prior. The Omani delegation, led by Sālim ibn Sulṭān (Sultan Sa'īd's brother), traveled to the Persian court and successfully secured an alliance. The Shah ordered a formidable relief force: a cavalry army of 2,500 men under the command of Sadiq Khan. The arrival of the Persians at Barka initially turned the tide. With this new professional cavalry, Said bin Sultan launched a counter-offensive and successfully reclaimed the Nakhal forts, momentarily breaking the Wahhabi momentum. Faced with this new threat, the Saudi commander Mutlaq Al-Mutairi withdrew from his base at Al-Buraimi and began the long journey back to the Nejd. The retreat was short-lived. Sheikh Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Jabri, a local leader aligned with the Saudis, hurried after Mutlaq, intercepting him and pleading for a return to confront the joint Iranian-Omani force. He successfully

persuaded the commander by promising to personally fund the campaign and supply the necessary provisions.

Mutlaq returned with a vengeance, demonstrating his mastery of tribal diplomacy. He mobilized a massive coalition of desert tribes, including the Naim, Bani Qitab, Al-Dhawahir, and Al-Duru'. Significantly, for the first time, the Omani tribe of Bani Bu Ali defected to the Saudi side, viewing the Persian intervention as a foreign invasion. Sālim ibn Sulṭān and Sadiq Khan's Persians, reinforced by Sheikh Issa bin Saleh Al-Harthi and his tribesmen. The ensuing Battle of Izki was a disaster for the coalition. The joint Iranian-Omani forces were utterly defeated. Sadiq Khan was wounded and fled back to the coast at Barka, effectively abandoning his stranded troops in the Omani interior. The remnants of the defeated allied forces attempted to regroup at Samail, but Mutlaq gave them no respite. The Saudi-led tribes pursued them relentlessly, seizing the town and laying siege to the Samail Fort, which was being held by the Persians. The fortress eventually fell, marking the total collapse of the Iranian land campaign. To conclude this chapter of dominance, Mutlaq turned his sights toward the sea. Learning that two Persian ships were stationed at the strategic harbor of Muttrah, he launched a daring land-to-sea assault. The Saudi forces succeeded in destroying the Persian vessels, an act that not only humiliated the Qājār Shah but also reasserted that no foreign power whether British or Persian could easily challenge the Wahhabi hegemony over the Omani coast.

Seeking to maintain the momentum of Mutlaq Al-Mutairi's previous successes, Imām Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz dispatched a specific expedition known as a *sariyah* (a smaller, targeted military detachment) to Oman. While the official mission was religious to teach the fundamentals of the faith and ensure his followers were adhering to the reformist doctrine, the underlying objective was clearly strategic: to monitor and suppress any resurgence of the Al Bu Said power. This Saudi detachment soon found

itself facing a massive mobilization of Omani forces. Led by Qays ibn Aḥmad (the ruler of Sohar) and the brother of Sultan Saʿīd, the local Omani army swelled to approximately 10,000 men. It was a desperate attempt to reclaim their sovereignty from the Wahhabi-aligned forces.

However, the Saudi influence was not limited to land. Sultān ibn Ṣaqar ibn Rāshid, the Wahhabi-aligned Ruler of Ras al-Khaymah and head of the Qawasim, mobilized his own maritime and tribal networks. He gathered roughly 3,000 elite warriors to intercept the Omani advance.

The two armies collided at Khawr Fakkān, a strategic point between Oman's Al-Bāṭinah region and the territories of Ras al-Khaymah. The geography of the site, squeezed between the rugged mountains and the sea, set the stage for a catastrophe. The battle was exceptionally fierce, but the tactical discipline of the Qawasim and the fervor of the Saudi-backed fighters ultimately shattered the Omani lines. Qays ibn Aḥmad, one of the most capable leaders of the Al Bu Said family, was killed in the heat of the combat. The Omani forces suffered a staggering blow, with reports suggesting that approximately 4,000 men died. Many were cut down in the retreat, while others perished by drowning in the sea as they attempted to escape the carnage on the shore.

The Battle of Khawr Fakkān was a huge blow to the Omani empire. Not only did it result in the loss of a key member of the ruling family, but it also decimated the military manpower of the Batinah coast.

The climax of the year's hostilities occurred on December 31, 1809, centering on the strategic stronghold of Shināṣ. In a desperate attempt to break the Saudi-Qawasim stranglehold on the Batinah coast, a massive operation was launched, utilizing combined forces by sea and land to besiege the town and its fortress. The attackers, which included Omani loyalists and British naval support (marking a rare moment of direct colonial intervention), demanded the immediate surrender of the garrison. When the Wahhābīs refused to surrender the fortress, a heavy bombardment commenced. The attacking forces opened fire with

cannons, hoping to breach the thick mud-brick walls and demoralize the defenders.

However, the resilience of the Wahhabi garrison proved greater than anticipated. The initial shelling did not achieve its objective. What followed was a confrontation of extreme brutality. The battle was fierce, transitioning from a standoff into a desperate melee. Despite the technological advantage of the naval artillery, the land forces particularly the Omani contingents were lured into a trap.

A great massacre occurred on the Omani forces, as the Saudi-aligned fighters launched a counter-attack that caught the Sultan's troops in a disorganized state. The carnage was so severe that it shattered the morale of the expedition. Faced with the mounting pile of casualties and the failure to secure the fort, Sayyid Sa'īd ibn Sulṭān was forced to withdraw from the area. The failure at Shināṣ was yet another major defeat for the Omani empire. Coming so soon after the disaster at Khawr Fakkān, it solidified the perception that the Al Bu Said were incapable of defending their own territory without substantial and sustained foreign aid. For the Wahhabi movement

In April, a Persian fleet sailed from Bushire carrying 4,000 men with the ambitious goal of joining a second force from Muscat. Their target was a joint attack upon the Jalahima at Khaur Hassan, which was intended to serve as a prelude to a final strike against the Qawasim of Ras al-Khaima. The expedition was plagued by a lack of sufficient shipping and poor strategic planning. Before they could even rendezvous with their Omani allies, the Persian fleet encountered a superior force of 22 Qasimi dhows. The resulting naval engagement was a disaster for the Persians; they lost six of their largest vessels and were forced to return to Bushire in a humiliating defeat. The failure of the Persian naval expedition emboldened the Saudi forces. In 1810, the Wahhabis marched on the capital itself, laying siege to Muscat. The city's defenses were initially saved by the Persian commander Sadiq Khan, who managed to repulse the attackers. In a desperate bid to break the tightening blockade, a joint Omani-Persian

force launched a sortie against a Wahhabi outpost near the city. The attempt failed miserably, providing the Wahhabis with the pretext they needed for a total assault.

In 1811, the Wahhabis re-besieged the city. After months of attrition, the defenses buckled, and Muscat fell. The Saudi-led forces ravaged and pillaged the town, before sweeping through the Eastern Hajar mountains in what was described as a "tornado of bloodshed and destruction." The traditional centers of Omani power were systematically dismantled, leaving the Al Bu Said dynasty on the brink of extinction and the expulsion of Iranian troops out of Oman. While consolidating his gains, the Saudi commander Mutlaq Al-Mutairi received intelligence that the British Navy had landed near Suhar. Recognizing the threat of a modern European military presence, Mutlaq quickly reinforced the captured Omani fortresses at Barka and Sur to secure his rear before marching to meet the British.

The two forces, one the supreme power of the Arabian desert, the other the world's leading naval empire, collided at Ibri. The British detachment was led by Captain Charles Fenton, who sought to use disciplined European volley fire to break the tribal lines. However, Mutlaq's forces utilized the terrain and their sheer numbers to overwhelm the expedition.

In the ensuing chaos, Captain Charles Fenton was killed in action. The British forces were decisively defeated and forced to retreat to their ships, marking one of the few instances where a British land expedition in the Gulf was soundly beaten by the Wahhabis. In 1811, the Persians, by Sadiq Khan, sent a naval campaign led by his son to Qatar. The campaign succeeded in destroying Zubarah and capturing the Saudi tribal leaders there. The Al Khalifa family, who had been the established rulers of Bahrain, refused to accept their displacement or the ideological imposition from al-Diriya. Recognizing that they could not retake the islands alone, they engaged in a masterclass of regional diplomacy. They successfully sought assistance from a broad Omani empire who saw an opportunity to weaken the Saudi-Qawasim maritime alliance eager to

check the Saudi advance near their own shores Omani Forces successfully attacked Saudi garrison. Despite the initial Saudi success in fortifying the islands, they found themselves isolated and surrounded by superior naval numbers This was a much needed victory for the Omanis they managed to expel the garrison entirely, capturing several key personnel and taking high-ranking prisoners. These captives served as vital leverage in subsequent negotiations with the leadership in al-Diriya While the Wahhabis had reached the pinnacle of their power in Oman and the Gulf by 1811, the geopolitical landscape was about to shift. The Ottoman Empire, deeply alarmed by the loss of the Holy Cities and the expansion into the Gulf, finally responded by commissioning Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt to launch a massive counter-invasion of the hijaz but A severe setback by the British campaign against the Qawasim in 1810 Said appealed to the French empire once again to Lift the Saudi siege of Bawshar Though the Napoleonic administration was initially hesitant, the prospect of gaining a strategic foothold in the Gulf proved too tempting to ignore. France dispatched a detachment of 600 soldiers to Muscat, under the command of General Armand de Lavoisier. Upon his arrival, Lavoisier bolstered his ranks by recruiting 400 Omani soldiers, forming a unique Franco-Omani task force

Lavoisier departed from Muscat and marched toward the besieged district of Bawshar. His arrival was a shock to the Saudi commanders; Abdullah ibn Rashid al-Harbi was reportedly stunned to see the tricolor of Imperial France appearing on the Omani horizon. Despite his surprise, Al-Harbi quickly gathered his forces to meet this new European threat

A fierce battle ensued as the French and Saudi forces collided. The engagement showcased the clash of two very different military philosophies Abdullah ibn Rashid al-Harbi proved to be a master of desert maneuver. Recognizing that the French were reliant on their artillery center, he ordered his troops to outflank the French forces The Saudi cavalry, renowned for their speed and ferocity, successfully penetrated the French flanks. The battle turned into a chaotic melee to the north, where the disciplined French formations were broken by the surging tribal

horsemenThe result was a catastrophe for the expedition. General Armand de Lavoisier was killed in the heat of the battle, and with their commander fallen and their flanks obliterated, the French forces were forced to withdrawIn the wake of the defeat, the command fell to the assistant commander, Henri de Villeneuve. Tasked with salvaging the remnants of the mission, Villeneuve retreated to the coast. His subsequent reports to Paris were filled with somber assessments of the region. He emphasized both the strategic importance of Ras al-Khaima as a naval nest that could challenge any European fleet

and in 1811 These people from Oman experienced some discord and the Bani Yas broke their covenant

So Saud wrote to Abdul Aziz bin Ghardaqah, ruler of Al-Ahsa ordering him to march on Oman and be the commander of the army there When he arrived in Oman, a battle took place between him and the Bani Yas and other people of Oman. Abdul Aziz and his Muslim companions were defeated, and he was killed, along with about two hundred men

The year 1812 marked a tactical shift in the conflict, as the Omani resistance evolved into a sophisticated irregular war. The highlands of Jabal Shams The Rise of the Omani Insurgency Unlike the large-scale pitched battles of previous years, the resistance now consisted of small, mobile war bands. These groups, often numbering only twenty to forty men, utilized the terrain to their advantage

They practiced classic guerrilla warfare, ambushing Wahhabi patrols in narrow mountain passes at dawn and raiding supply caravans to kill guards and disperse vital camel transport

However, this success led to overconfidence. In late 1812, Omani tribal forces attempted a large-scale raid to sever the principal supply route between the interior garrisons and the Najdi bases. The Wahhabi commanders, having penetrated tribal intelligence networks, were prepared. They lured the Omani fighters into open terrain, utilized

disciplined firing lines, and deployed swift reinforcements. The ambush turned into a slaughter; several tribal leaders were killed

Despite the setbacks in the mountains, the Omani tribes scored a stunning victory on the coast. In a brutal night raid near Suwaiq, men of the Al Sa'd tribe stormed the camp of Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, reportedly killing 900 Wahhabi fighters

At sea, the geopolitical situation remained volatile. Although the British campaign of 1809 had damaged the Qawasim fleet, by the end of 1813 (1227 AH), the Qawasim had re-emerged as the most formidable naval power in the Gulf. Simultaneously, the Wahhabi governor in Buraimi launched a final, devastating invasion, sweeping through Muscat, eastern Sohar, and Jaalan with "sword and fire." He even succeeded in converting two major eastern Omani tribes to the Wahhabi doctrine, threatening to permanently tip the religious balance of the region

the end of 1813. Following a successful raid on the Batinah region, the legendary Saudi commander Mutlaq Al-Mutairi was killed during a skirmish with a local tribe. His death was a catastrophic blow to the First Saudi State's presence in the East. Without his charismatic and ruthless leadership, the inherent "weakness of the Wahhabi position" in the Oman peninsula was laid bare

Muscat's sphere of influence Encompassed some Of its former land in 1815 by Omani British forces attacked the Qawasim coast on the Iranian coast, and the city of Laft on Qeshm Island but no progress was made. Eventually They withdraw from the island The island of Bahrain fearing for its Independence From Persian and Omani invasion they pledge allegiance to the Wahhabis

The British Campaign Against Ras Al Khaimah (1809)

By 1807, the British East India Company (EIC) felt its monopoly over the Indian trade routes was under siege Two factors drove the intervention The French Threat: Napoleon had established diplomatic missions in

Tehran and Muscat. The British feared a French-Qawasim alliance that could threaten the flank of India. The Qawasim had become the supreme maritime power in the Gulf, operating over 800 vessels and 19,000 men.

In 1808, they captured the large merchant ship *Minerva*, converting it into a flagship. Before the fleet sailed, two British officials disagreed on the strategy. John Malcolm wanted a purely naval campaign to assert general dominance. David Seton argued that the Wahhabis (the Saudi state) were the true source of the problem and should be confronted on land. The government in Bombay ordered a strictly naval-focused campaign. The British were forbidden from engaging Saudi forces on the mainland to avoid an all-out land war. The task force was led by Commodore John Wainwright and Lt. Col. Lionel Smith, consisting of Royal Navy frigates and EIC cruisers. The mission started poorly when the transport ship *Stromboli* sank just 24 hours after leaving Bombay, taking a large portion of the expedition's ammunition with it. Upon arriving in Muscat, Sultan Sa'īd expressed deep skepticism, warning that the British force was too small to permanently break the Qawasim, who were backed by 20,000 Bedouin warriors.

On November 11, the fleet arrived off Ras al-Khaimah. The Attack: On November 13, Smith led an amphibious landing. British troops used fire to clear the houses as they fought toward the Sheikh's Palace. The British burned over 50 ships (including 30 large dhows) and the captured *Minerva*.

Hearing reports that a massive Saudi relief army was marching toward the city, Smith ordered a quick evacuation on November 14 to avoid being trapped on land. The fleet crossed to the Persian coast to neutralize Qawasim allies Bandar Lingeh: The population fled, and the British burned 20 dhows without resistance.

Luft (Qeshm Island): The Bani Ma'in tribe and their Sheikh, Mulla Husayn, refused to surrender. A bloody battle erupted at the fort on November 27. The British eventually captured the fort and handed it over to a pro-Muscat ruler, Sheikh Darwish. Unfortunately, it was really taken by the Wahhabis.

The campaign's final and most tragic engagement occurred at Shināṣ. On January 2, 1810, the British used heavy 24-pounder cannons to reduce the fort to rubble. Despite fierce resistance, the Qawasim garrison was captured. The British withdrawal, fearing the arrival of the Saudi general Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, the British withdrew to their ships on January 4. The British left 4,000 Omani troops on the beach. Mutlaq Al-Mutairi seized the moment and charged the abandoned Omani lines, killing 2,000 men while the British watched from the sea. For three days, Mutlaq and the British stood in a tense standoff. Following this carnage, Colonel Smith realized that a land war with the Wahhabis was unwinnable under current orders. He negotiated a treaty with Mutlaq Al-Mutairi.

The Wahhabis promised not to attack British-flagged ships. The British promised not to intervene in the Omani-Saudi land wars. While the British destroyed over 80 vessels and leveled Ras al-Khaimah, the campaign was a strategic failure. The Qawasim managed to hide the majority of their fleet in obscure inlets. By 1811, the attacks resumed. The 1809 campaign resulted in only a temporary weakening of the Qawasim and a humiliating realization for Muscat that British "protection" had strict and deadly limits.

The Qawasim reached the coasts of the Red Sea and East Africa starting raiding African and European ships. One of the raids occurred near Yemen on an American ship, the SS Atlantic Star, a merchant vessel. Qawasim learned the troops on the ship, but the American sailors burned down most of the equipment of the ship itself. Which forest the Wahhabis soon. Near the coast of India, they coached another American warship, USS Resolute Liberty, which was attacked by the Wahhabi and acquired advanced American weapons from the ship.

The Qawasim also attacked ships belonging to the port of Basra in (1813 CE) and started attacking British ships once again. Due to complaints from the British Resident in Bushire, William Bruce Sheikhamd, Hassan bin Rahma and Imam Abdullah bin Saud of Diriyah agree to halt attacks on British ships in 1814. The Treaty of Bushehr (1814) states that the Qasimi ports shall be open to British subjects, who shall be permitted to visit and trade in them.

and in other ports in the Gulf The desire of both parties to maintain friendly relations and bury the past

Conflict with Persia (1808–1816)

The enmity was rooted in the 1802 (1216 AH) sack of Karbala. Under Saud bin Abdulaziz, Wahhabi forces desecrated the shrine of Imam Husayn and slaughtered the inhabitants. This act of violence against one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites provoked a vow of revenge from Fath-Ali Shah Qajar

By 1805, the Wahhabis expanded their reach across the Persian Gulf. Using the naval power of their allies, the Al Qasimi, they seized the Persian island of Qeshm Following the Saudi dominance in Oman, the Italian physician Dr. Morisi advised Sultan Said bin Sultan to seek Qajar aid Sultan Said sent his brother, Salem bin Sultan, to Shiraz. The Shah appointed Saadi Khan to lead a force of 2,500 troops to Barka, Oman In early 1808, Saadi Khan successfully recaptured the Nakhal forts. Encouraged, he launched a naval campaign against Qatar, destroying Zubarah and capturing pro-Saudi tribal leaders Mutlaq Al-Mutairi responded by gathering a tribal force with support from Sheikh Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Jabri. Tribal allies included the Na'im, Bani Qitab, Al-Dhawahir, and Al-Duru with new reinforcements from the Bani Bu Ali Omani tribes opposing Qajar interference Meanwhile, Persian-Omani forces under Saadi Khan assembled at Izki, fortifying its castle and installing cannons. Sheikh Issa bin Saleh Al-Harthi joined the allied force A fierce battle erupted near Izki, resulting in a Wahhabi victory. Saadi Khan got wounded and fled to Barka and the Wahhabis besieged the castle in izki the Wahhabis captured 120 troops along with artillery and supplies Mutlaq's forces continued their campaign, seizing Samail and laying siege to its fort from the Persians which eventually fell. Upon hearing of two Persian ships stationed in Muttrah, Mutlaq launched a successful assault,destroying the the Persian ships and besieged Muscat in 1810. Simultaneously, Saudi forces struck Bandar Abbas in 1809, killing Governor Aziz Khan and besieging Minab

In April 1809, a Persian fleet of 4,000 men sailed from Bushire to attack the Saudi allies at Khaur Hassan The fleet was intercepted by 22 Qasimi

dhow. The Persians lost six large vessels and their commander, Bahram Khan Zandani, was captured

this is Qajar only seriously attempted to combat the Wahhabis overseas nearby In response Ali Mirza sends Saadi Khan to Oman an launched new naval attacks on Bahrain and Muscat they were Able to besiege Fahd bin Afaysan and the garrison at the Manama Palace numbering about three hundred men They laid siege to them and held them for several days and Managed to capture the Fahd bin Afaysan and sixteen men with the help of the Omani army and Al Khalifa but pledged allegiance to [Saudi](#) on this basis giving him their oath and covenant and. The release Fahd bin Afaysan

Saadi Khan briefly rerouted Wahhabi forces in Muscat the Wahhabis returned with overwhelming force, successfully sacking Muscat Ending Persian presence in Oman by 1811

Realizing their military weakness the Persian government accepted a Saudi delegation. They granted the Saudis full diplomatic status and agreed not to intervene in the conflict a strategic move to hide Persia's inability to fight the Wahhabis directly

Saudi influence reached deep into the Persian mainland, specifically the regions of Bastak and Jahangiriyeh Anxiety in Tehran Local power struggles between Abdullah Khan (Ruler of Laristan) and Ahmed Khan Bastaki led some locals to convert to the Wahhabi doctrine to gain leverage Saudi groups entering the regions of Bastak and Jahangiriyeh Iranian officials initially tried to ignore these movements, treating them as minor border issues or internal disputes Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, a famous traveler of the time, who provided a more accurate assessment. He predicted that these movements were not isolated incidents but were signs that the region was on the brink of major historical transformations They even started to pay tribute to the Saudi state by 1813

Despite the diplomatic truce, the Iranian court authorized a new expedition under Mirza Rostam Khan. He met Mutlaq Al-Mutairi's army near al-Musannah in Oman. The Persians were defeated, and Rostam Khan

was killed. By 1813, even these interior regions were forced to pay tribute to the Saudi state

Qasimi boats attacked a Persian ship carrying goods from Muscat to Bandar Abbas, and succeeded in capturing it after a fierce resistance in which many were killed on both sides in 1814 A Qasimi force under Shaikh Muhammad bin Qadib (800 men) landed at Bushire. They plundered the Bihbihani quarter, emptying every house and caravanserai in revenge for the town's opposition to Saudi interests in 1816 Sayyid Sa'id and the pirate-ruler Rahmah ibn Jabir attacked Bahrain with Persian support. However, the Al Khalifa successfully repelled them with the combined help of the Wahhabis and the Qawasim by 1817 In October, Qasimi raiders burned villages on Busheab Island and captured five large buggalows at Aseeloo (valued at three lakhs of rupees). The crews were slaughtered. The alarm in Bushire was so great that the Governor struggled to prevent the entire population from abandoning the city and fleeing inland

the First Saudi State had effectively humiliated the Qajar Empire. The Persians were forced into a policy of "politic silence," unable to protect their coastal towns or shipping from the Wahhabi-Qawasim alliance

This defeats soon reached the Russian empire which was pleased by the efforts of the Saudi army and As for the Persians it became clear that They couldn't afford to Fight in the foreign Army It's hoped that the Ottoman Empire would Fight of The Saudis

The British Campaign Against Ras Al Khaimah (1816)

Between 1814 and 1816, the Qawasim expanded their theater of operations beyond the Gulf into the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea The Qasimi fleet led by Prince Ibrahim bin Rahma Al Qasimi captured 3

British ships near Mocha (March 16, 1816 CE) they also targeted French ship near Egypt

The British Resident, William Bruce, alleged that the Qawasim had seized three Indian merchant ships from Surat that were flying the British flag In August 1816, Bruce sent a letter of protest to Sheikh Hassan bin Rahmah in Ras al-Khaimah. The Sheikh flatly denied the charges, asserting that no British ships had been touched by his subjects

The British sent a fleet led by the frigate Ariel and the commander Bridges to Ras al-Khaimah to demand reparations

Return of all cargo from the Surat ships Surrender of Ibrahim bin Rahmah (the alleged commander of the raids) Handing over two of Sheikh Hassan's sons as hostages to be kept in Bombay as a guarantee of future conduct The British grew terrified of a potential Omani-Qawasim alliance. Despite their mutual hatred, a temporary truce between the two local powers would have threatened the very foundation of the East India Company's trade

Divide and Rule British officials intentionally worked to fuel the conflict between Muscat and Ras al-Khaimah to ensure neither became too powerful In 1818, Captain Robert Taylor prepared a massive dossier detailing every Qasim harbor, their allied tribes, and their economic strengths. This was used to plan a final, crushing blow

Governor Nepean of Bombay proposed a radical plan in April 1819 to turn the Arabian Gulf into a British internal lake The British attempted to form a Triple Alliance (Britain, Egypt, and Muscat). Captain George Forster Sadleir was sent to negotiate with Ibrahim Pasha, the Egyptian commander who had just destroyed the Saudi capital at al-Diriya

Sultan Sa'īd rejected the idea of Egyptian involvement. He feared that if Ibrahim Pasha's army entered Oman, they would never leave. He claimed his own forces, combined with the British, were sufficient to destroy the Qawasim By the time Sadleir reached the Egyptian camp in Al-Ahsa (June

1821), Ibrahim Pasha had already begun withdrawing his troops to the Hejaz. The "Triple Alliance" died before it could begin. In March 1819, Sheikh Abdullah bin Ahmad of Bahrain tried to act as a mediator. Hassan bin Rahmah wrote directly to the British expressing a desire for a peace treaty, arguing that the 1816 mission by William Bruce had been based on false premises and had unfairly broken previous agreements.

However, Governor Nepean was committed to total victory. In April 1819, he formally rejected all peace overtures from the Qawasim. The British determined that only a military force of at least 3,000 land troops and heavy artillery would suffice. This set the stage for the Great Expedition of December 1819, the largest naval operation in the history of the Gulf, which would finally break the Qawasim power and lead to the General Treaty of 1820.

Governance and Economy of the First Saudi State

The First Saudi State (1744–1818) was not merely a military power; it was a administrative and economic project that sought to unify the fractured tribal landscape of the Arabian Peninsula under a centralized authority. Built upon the alliance between Imam Muhammad bin Saud and Sheikh Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, its governance was defined by the strict application of Islamic Law (Sharia), which replaced local tribal customs with a unified legal and fiscal system. Economically, the state transformed the region from a collection of isolated oasis economies into a cohesive network. By securing trade routes and establishing a disciplined system of taxation (Zakat), the Emirate of Diriyah turned the Nejd from a barren interior into the political and financial heart of Arabia. Its economic reach eventually extended to the bustling ports of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, allowing it to fund its massive military expansion while providing a level of internal security and order previously unknown in the peninsula.

The System of Government of the Saudis

The governance and military structure of the First Saudi State were characterized by a blend of strict religious adherence and a sophisticated administrative hierarchy that transformed the Arabian Peninsula from a

collection of warring tribes into a unified political entity The political system was built upon a set of laws and regulations established by the Imams of the First Saudi State. This "statute" served as the highest administrative authority, governing the roles of the Imam, the Crown Prince, the provincial emirates, and the consultative Shura system

The Imam was the supreme authority, combining both political and religious leadership. His primary responsibility was the maintenance of security and stability Under the Imams, the state achieved a level of security where individuals could travel from east to west without fear. Livestock was often left in pastures throughout the spring without shepherds, left unguarded until the owners needed them Because of the vastness of the state, the Imam integrated the tribes into the security apparatus, making each tribe responsible for the safety of its own territory The Imam personally oversaw financial, military, and educational affairs

The title of Crown Prince was hereditary, typically passing to the Imam's eldest son. This system was designed to ensure stability and prevent succession crises During the reign of Imam Abdulaziz, the title was pledged to his son, Saud. The Crown Prince served as the Imam's deputy and advisor, leading armies and governing in the Imam's absence or during times of illness While sons and relatives participated in military leadership and consultation, the Imams generally did not allow family members to govern specific provinces. This was a deliberate policy to prevent the rise of independent power centers and potential tyranny within the family

The Emirate As the state expanded, the Imams appointed governors (Emirs) to represent them in distant regions Governors were typically chosen from the same region they were to rule. This ensured they were knowledgeable about local conditions and held the necessary social status to govern effectively.

The governor was charged with implementing Sharia law, collecting Zakat (alms), and mobilizing the local population for war. They were the eyes and ears of Diriyah, relaying local intelligence and receiving orders from the Imam The Imams consistently applied the principle of Shura Imam

Muhammad bin Saud and Imam Abdulaziz frequently consulted religious scholars on matters of faith and finance. As the state grew, the circle of consultation expanded to include provincial governors, tribal chiefs, and experienced men of opinion. During the reign of Imam Saud, consultative councils became vital during military campaigns, utilizing the expertise of tribal leaders to plan maneuvers.

The Military System we talked about this previously in our previous chapters. The First Saudi State did not possess a standing, permanent army in the modern sense. Instead, its forces were raised based on immediate need. When a campaign was announced, the Imam or his deputy requested a specific number of fighters from provincial emirs and tribal sheikhs. In addition to these levies, volunteers often joined out of religious conviction or for a share of the spoils. Men between the ages of 18 and 60 were eligible for service. Every individual possessing a horse was required to join. In distant campaigns (such as those to Damascus or Oman), the Imam called for the "Salla," the elite of the cavalry and camel riders. Each soldier was responsible for his own provisions: roughly 100 lbs of flour, 50–60 lbs of dates, 20 lbs of ghee (clarified butter), and a bag of barley for his mount. If an individual could not serve, he could hire a substitute for 8–10 Spanish dollars for a 40-day campaign. While the general army was temporary, the Imams maintained a permanent elite force in Diriyah known as the Al-Manqiyya. This guard consisted of approximately 300 of the most famous and courageous warriors in Arabia. The Imam provided these men and their families with annual supplies of wheat, dates, and ghee, along with horses and weapons. They accompanied the Imam on all campaigns but were often held in reserve, used only as a decisive force or sent in small groups to bolster struggling units. Their horses were often protected by padded wool "armor" to resist swords and spears. The Saudi military was defined by extreme speed, secrecy, and maneuverability. They often employed "hit-and-run" tactics and deception. To subdue rebellious towns, they would build small forts nearby to harass the population until they surrendered. They utilized swords, spears, daggers, and muskets. They also made significant use of captured artillery, particularly during the Ottoman-Egyptian invasions and Persian intervention or British

campaigns French observers noted that the Saudis used the harsh desert geography as a weapon. They could endure thirst and heat that destroyed their enemies, ensuring "victory before the battle" even began

International Observations The state's success drew the attention of global powers

The French View: The French Ambassador in Istanbul, Monsieur Barandier, wrote to Foreign Minister Talleyrand: "One can now expect to see a new Arab kingdom, capable of attaining a degree of greatness that places it on the same level as other powers in Asia

The British View: Historian John Lorimer noted that the Saudi government in Nejd was, in essence, a movement toward civilization and order, aimed at suppressing local wars and personal disputes

The Ottoman View: Officials of the Ottoman Empire regarded the First Saudi State as a dangerous religious and রাজনৈতিক challenge. Reports sent to Selim III described the Wahhabi movement as a rebellion that threatened imperial authority over the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. This perception ultimately led to the Ottoman-backed Egyptian campaigns under Muhammad Ali Pasha

The Moroccan View: The Alaouite dynasty observed developments in Arabia cautiously. While geographically distant, Moroccan scholars and officials were aware of the religious claims of the Saudi-Wahhabi movement, often viewing it through a theological lens

The Persian View: The Qajar dynasty, under Fath-Ali Shah Qajar, perceived the Saudi expansion especially after the 1802 sack of Karbala as a direct مذهبی and geopolitical threat. Persian accounts frequently portrayed the Wahhabis as hostile extremists, justifying military involvement in the Gulf and Oman

The Austrian View: Diplomats of the Austrian Empire, relying largely on Ottoman correspondence, interpreted the Saudi movement as part of the broader instability affecting the eastern provinces of the Ottoman world.

Austrian reports tended to frame it as a regional uprising rather than a global القوة.

The Russian View: The Russian Empire followed events through diplomatic channels in Istanbul. Russian observers viewed the conflict pragmatically, as it weakened Ottoman cohesion something that aligned indirectly with Russian strategic interests in the Near East.

The Spanish View: The Spanish Empire had limited direct engagement, but Spanish intellectual circles especially those concerned with Islamic reform movements sometimes compared the Wahhabi movement to earlier puritanical currents in Islamic history, noting its rapid expansion with curiosity

The American View: Early representatives and travelers from the United States had minimal direct contact with the First Saudi State. However, later 19th-century American writings often described it as a strict but نظم-oriented polity, emphasizing its role in bringing relative unity to central Arabia

By the early 19th century, the First Saudi State had melted thousands of scattered tribes into a single nation, creating a unified force that threatened the existing order of the entire Middle East.

Trade of the First Saudi State

The economy of the First Saudi State was far from an isolated desert system. It functioned as a sophisticated hub within a global network, connecting the Arabian heartland to empires in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

By leveraging the Hajj pilgrimage and securing vital trade routes, the state established a robust fiscal foundation that supported its rapid expansion

The Moroccan Connection (The Maghreb) Trade with Morocco was deeply intertwined with the Maghrebi Hajj Caravan Pilgrims and traders from cities like Fes and Marrakech brought fine textiles and high-quality Moroccan leather to Diriyah and other Najdi cities Morocco purchased high-value Arabian goods, including pearls, incense (frankincense and myrrh), coffee, and Islamic books authored by the scholars of Diriyah The trade was accompanied by an intellectual exchange. Sultan Sulayman of Morocco was so inspired by the Saudi reformist movement that in 1812 he banned certain practices (like pilgrimages to saintly shrines) and even removed the dome (qubba) over his father's grave Despite the geopolitical tensions of the Napoleonic era, French products reached the Saudi state primarily through the port of Jeddah French merchant vessels brought luxury fabrics and fine woolen cloths France was a major consumer of Arabian coffee (Mocha), gums, resins, and raw materials like wool and pearls to fuel their industrial production. Highly prized Arabian horses were also imported for French military breeding

French agents provided some of the earliest European documentation of the state, including the first known map of Diriyah produced by Consul Joseph Rousseau in 1808 Britain was the dominant maritime force, and the Saudi state engaged heavily with the British via Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta Large quantities of textiles, sugar, and iron, as well as modern firearms and lead. The British sought Arabian horses for their cavalry in India and pearls from the Gulf Wahhabi merchants established permanent networks in India to manage these exchanges

The Saudi economy relied heavily on European silver currencies

Austria The Maria Theresa Thaler (MTT) became the standard medium of exchange in Najd due to its consistent silver content. Vienna continued to mint these coins long after 1780 specifically to satisfy Arabian demand. In exchange, Austria received coffee and incense Spain The Spanish Real (Silver Dollar) was the dominant global currency in Saudi ports. Spain also

imported the highest quality Arabian horses for its aristocracy and military

Beyond the major European powers, the First Saudi State maintained diverse connections across the globe. Trade with China was mostly indirect but significant; high-quality silks, porcelain, and tea arrived via sea routes in exchange for Saudi copper, pearls, and incense. To the north, Russian timber, iron, and linen reached Saudi markets via the Black Sea and Ottoman trade routes, while the Russian elite consumed Arabian spices and pearls. In Africa, the Abyssinian Empire (Ethiopia) was a major partner, serving as a source for livestock, hides, and gold. In exchange, Wahhabi merchants exported dates, textiles, and salt to the Ethiopian highlands. Like the Saudi state, Ethiopia heavily utilized the Maria Theresa Thaler for its own currency. Meanwhile, trade with the Portuguese Empire was more limited, focusing on shipments of spices from Brazil and Goa in exchange for Arabian gunpowder. Even the young United States entered the market in the early 1800s, with merchants from Salem, Massachusetts, appearing in ports like Jeddah to trade manufactured goods for coffee and spices.

The movement of these global goods relied on key "gateways" that the Saudi state protected and taxed. Cities like Basra, Baghdad, and Damascus were vital conduits for importing specialized weaponry (spears and firearms) and high-quality textiles into the interior. On the eastern side, the Al-Ahsa Connection served as the primary entry point for Persian luxury goods such as silk, carpets, and ceramics which were then transported by inland caravans to the markets of Diriyah. A massive portion of the state's trade was fueled by the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Pilgrims from across the Muslim world—from the Caucasus to Morocco—brought local goods to sell in Mecca and Medina to fund their journeys. This created a seasonal but massive international market that allowed for the exchange of Russian coins, Persian textiles, and North African leather all within the borders of the Saudi state. The First Saudi State's trade policy was defined by securing the routes. By suppressing tribal raiding and establishing a unified legal and fiscal system, they

lowered the "risk cost" for international caravans. This encouraged merchants from as far as Massachusetts and China to engage with the "Saudi tide," ensuring that Diriyah remained a wealthy and well-supplied capital until its fall in 1818

Currency of the First Saudi state

The monetary system of the First Saudi State (1727–1818) was a sophisticated tapestry of local mints and international currencies. Because the state sat at the crossroads of global trade and the Hajj pilgrimage, its markets accepted a wide variety of gold, silver, and copper coins from Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and local Arabian workshops. The First Saudi State utilized several currencies that were specific to the Arabian Peninsula, reflecting the local economic needs of Najd and the Hijaz.

Al-Ahmar A gold or high-value coin commonly used in central and eastern Arabia. It served as a significant unit of account, with 17 Ahmar being equivalent to one Austrian Thaler (French Riyal). **Al-Mohammadiyah**: Minted in Makkah between 1804 and 1813 during the reign of Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz, this coin was made from a mixture of copper and other metals. It served as a fractional currency, with 200 Mohammadiyah equaling one Ahmar.

Al-Mutabbaq: A silver currency specific to the residents of al-Arid in Najd. These coins were stamped locally after minting to certify their value within the Saudi heartland. **Al-Harf**: A silver and copper unit where twenty pieces were equivalent to one Austrian Thaler. The most dominant silver coin in the First Saudi State was the Maria Theresa Thaler, locally referred to as the French Riyal or simply the Riyal. Minted in 1780, the coin featured the bust of Austrian Empress Maria Theresa on one side and the double-headed eagle of the Austrian Empire on the other.

A smaller fractional piece of this silver coin was known locally as **al-Muhalliq**. It was favored by Saudi merchants for its consistent silver weight (one ounce), making it the primary standard for large commercial transactions. Due to the proximity of the Ottoman Empire and British

maritime trade, several foreign prestige currencies circulated in Saudi markets. The Ottoman Dinar, the Golden Sultani, and fractional units of the Funduqi were common. High-value silver piastres were also traded, though the local population generally avoided small Ottoman copper coins, preferring more stable local or European alternatives.

The British Pound Sterling This gold coin held immense purchasing power and was primarily traded in the commercial ports of the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, where British maritime influence was strongest.

Al-Dawka (Venetian Gold): Also known as al-Mushakhas ("the personified") because it featured human inscriptions on both sides, these were gold coins minted in Venice, Italy. They were highly prized for their gold purity.

For daily market transactions buying grain, salt, or small household items, fractional copper coins were essential. **Al-Baqsha:** A small copper coin that came in denominations of halves, quarters, and eighths. Divisions of the Thaler: Because the silver Riyal was too valuable for small purchases, the complex system of Mohammadiyah, Baqsha, and Harf allowed the economy to function at every level, from the international pearl trade to the local village market.

This diverse currency system allowed the First Saudi State to integrate with the global economy while maintaining local control over the markets in Najd and the Hijaz.

The Ottoman–Saudi War and the Fall of Diriyah (1811–1818)

The Ottoman–Saudi War (1811–1818) was a defining struggle for the future of the Arabian Peninsula. This first phase (1811–1813) was characterized by massive amphibious operations, brutal desert warfare, and the eventual capture of the Holy Cities by the forces of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Wali of Egypt

Although Muhammad Ali Pasha did not initially display a clear ambition to expand into Arabia, the Hijaz campaign presented him with multiple strategic advantages First and foremost, it was a response to the orders of the Ottoman Sultan to suppress the so-called Wahhabi movement led by

the First Saudi State. Yet beyond obedience, Muhammad Ali recognized several opportunities. A chance to eliminate unreliable elements within his army, particularly irregular Albanian, Dalati, and Arnaut troops. A means to evade financial obligations to the Ottoman central government by claiming the campaign required extraordinary expenses. An opportunity to extract funds, artillery, and supplies from the Sultan under the pretext of war. Equally significant, the campaign allowed him to impose new taxes and levies on the population under the banner of a “holy war.” Gain immense prestige by recapturing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Present himself as the protector of the pilgrimage routes. Thus, the campaign combined political ambition, financial necessity, and religious legitimacy.

Muhammad Ali established a military camp near Cairo and entrusted command of the expedition to his son, Tusun Pasha. Following the massacre of the Mamluks in Cairo, he spent six and a half months assembling troops, weapons, supplies. The initial expedition consisted of 8,000 regular soldiers, later expanding to 14,000 troops in the Hijaz, including irregular Bedouin auxiliaries. In September 1811, the campaign began. Infantry traveled by sea from Suez to Yanbu. Cavalry under Tusun marched overland via the Sinai and Aqaba. After a month, Ottoman naval forces captured Yanbu with little resistance. Its Saudi-aligned commander, Sharif Jaber bin Jabbarah, withdrew after losing 300 men. The capture of Yanbu marked the first Ottoman foothold in the Hijaz. According to contemporary chronicler Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Ottoman troops looted merchants' goods, seized wealth and property, enslaved women and children. Celebrated the victory with artillery salutes and public festivities.

Tusun Pasha advanced inland, defeated forces of Sharif Jaber and Masud bin Madyan al-Harbi. Entered Yanbu al-Barr peacefully. Captured Al-Suwayq and subdued Badr. Bribery of tribal leaders. Distribution of gifts and money. The Saudis, led by Abdullah bin Saud (son of the Imam), prepared a massive ambush in the narrow defiles of Wadi al-Safra.

Abdullah positioned his Nejdi forces in a trench at the valley floor, while Othman al-Mudayfi (the Saudi governor of Hejaz) placed his troops in the mountains above

After three days of fierce fighting, the Ottoman-Egyptian forces were decimated. Tosun Pasha retreated to Yanbu with only 3,000 survivors, having lost 5,000 regular troops and many tribal allies. Saudi commanders Hadi bin Qarmala (Sheikh of Qahtan) and Manea bin Wuhair fell in battle

Muhammad Ali reacted decisively. Furious at the defeat, Muhammad Ali sent reinforcements under Ahmed Bonaparte with 15,000 troops and 3,000 Moroccan fighters. Ottoman forces marched toward Medina and besieged it. Ottoman forces surrounded the city, cut off the water supply, and used heavy artillery. They eventually blew up a section of the city wall using gunpowder mines in underground tunnels. After the wall collapsed, the city was taken. Ahmed Bonaparte reportedly built a "tower of skulls" from the Saudi defenders along the road to Yanbu as a terrifying warning. The Saudi governor, Masoud bin Mudyan, was captured, sent to Istanbul, and executed at the gates of the Sultan's palace. According to Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, Ottoman troops built a tower of skulls from fallen defenders. After Medina's fall, Saud bin Abdulaziz took defensive measures, strengthened positions around Mecca, and positioned troops in Wadi Marr. He secured the loyalty of Sharif Ghalib bin Musa'id. Once the Imam returned to Diriyah, Sharif Ghalib defected to the Ottomans, handing over Jeddah and Mecca without a fight. Under Faisal bin Saud, to support forces near Mecca, he personally led an army of 20,000 troops toward Medina.

He recaptured al-Hinakiyya from the Ottomans and started raiding Ottoman supply lines, burning palm groves and punishing hostile tribes. Ottoman forces regrouped. Tusun Pasha allied with Sharif Ghalib. Mustafa Bey attacked Turbah, initially besieging it, but he was ambushed and defeated and forced to retreat. Ottoman losses are 8,000 regular troops.

25,000 livestock Cost 35 million francs and Saudi Losses Loss of key Hijazi territories: Wadi al-Safra Taif Jeddah Loss of the holy cities Weakening of control in Oman Death of key commanders: Mutlaq bin Muhammad al-Mutairi Uthman bin Abdulrahman al-Adwani (captured and executed) The First Campaign (1811–1813) ended inconclusively but revealed critical realities The Saudis proved capable of defeating major Ottoman forces, as seen in Wadi al-Safra While the Saudis won the initial land battles, the Ottoman control of the sea and their superior financial resources allowed them to outlast and bribe tribal allegiances, slowly isolating the Saudi heartland of Nejd

By 1813, the war between the First Saudi State and the Ottoman Empire entered a decisive new phase. The earlier efforts of Tusun Pasha had failed to secure a lasting victory in the Hijaz, suffering setbacks at al-Hinakiyya and Turbah. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Muhammad Ali Pasha personally intervened, transforming the war into a large-scale, organized campaign that would determine the fate of Arabia Muhammad Ali Pasha arrived at the port of Jeddah in November 1813 (Dhu al-Qa'dah 1228 AH) with 4,000 regular troops, following Ottoman setbacks earlier that year

From the moment of his arrival, he demonstrated a far more calculated and methodical approach than previous commanders He reduced taxes on Bedouin tribes, aiming to eliminate discontent He distributed monthly stipends to tribal leaders tasked with maintaining order He turned Jeddah into a central military depot He organized logistical supply lines into the interior He secured naval support by hiring 20 ships from the Omani empire He established garrisons across strategic نقاط to prevent surprise attacks This marked a transition from reactive campaigning to structured military occupation and control

While preparing for war, Muhammad Ali moved swiftly to neutralize political uncertainty He entered Mecca and arrested Sharif Ghalib bin Musa'id, suspecting him of sympathizing with Diriyah Despite initially honoring him publicly, Muhammad Ali Imprisoned him suddenly Confiscated vast wealth, arms, and property Seized his palace in Ajyad

Exiled him via Cairo to Salonika, where he died in 1816 This act eliminated a key political intermediary and signaled direct Ottoman control over the Hijaz Tusun Pasha advanced with 6,000 troops toward the fortified town of Turbah east of Taif The defenders included Ghusab bin Shara'an al-Otaibi Rashid bin Jarshan al-Buqmi Ghalia al-Buqmiyya (who financed the defense and concealed her husband's death)

The Ottoman artillery bombarded the city Assaults attempted to scale the walls but The defenders held firm After days of failed assaults, the Saudi defenders launched a counterattack, forcing Tusun Pasha to retreat to Taif This defeat had major consequences Sharif Rajih defected to the Saudi side Simultaneously, Saudi commanders launched raids against tribes aligned with the Ottomans near al-Hinakiyya. These operations, however, faced resistance and resulted in losses, reflecting the fluid and decentralized nature of desert warfare In May 1814,

Saud bin Abdulaziz died in Diriyah His death marked a turning point Leadership passed to his son Abdullah bin Saud Though brave and respected, Abdullah lacked his father's political control over tribal alliances Internal cohesion of the Saudi state began to weaken

Ottoman forces captured Al-Qunfudhah via land and sea However, Saudi governor of Asir Tami bin Shuaib al-Mutahmi quickly counterattacked Cut off water supplies Besieged Ottoman forces Launched a decisive assault Ottoman forces were crushed Heavy casualties inflicted Weapons, artillery, and supplies captured Survivors fled by sea to Mecca and Jeddah

This was a major Saudi victory, demonstrating continued strength despite leadership transition

Ottoman commander Abidin Bey advanced with 20,000 troops against Bakhrosh ibn A'llas Despite Ottoman attempts Block mountain passes with boulders and Use terrain defensively the Saudis eventually counterattacked with reinforcements under Tami bin Shuaib Ottoman forces were defeated again Forced to retreat to Taif Saudi forces pursued

retreating Ottomans and besieged Taif Muhammad Ali personally marched from Mecca to relieve the city Instead of direct battle, he used deception Sent a fake message suggesting reinforcements had arrived The message reached Saudi commander Bakhrosh Fearing encirclement, Saudi forces withdrew allowing Muhammad Ali to break the siege without battle

Abidin Bey attempted a new strategy Used guides to navigate hidden mountain routes and Established a base near Saudi strongholds However Saudi forces ambushed the Ottomans at night The army collapsed Supplies and weapons were captured The location became known as Umm al-Janadil after the massacre Saudi forces regrouped under Faisal bin Saud

He managed to mobilise 10,000 Najdi fighters 20,000 tribal reinforcements Total of 25,000–30,000 troops They gathered at Ghazayil, preparing for a decisive confrontation This became the turning point of the war. This was the most significant battle of the phase, involving nearly 50,000 combatants Saudi forces occupied high ground Cut Ottoman supply lines Repelled cavalry attacks Muhammad Ali used a classic military ruse. He ordered his infantry to retreat in feigned panic. The Saudi forces, led by Faisal bin Saud and Tami bin Shu'ayb, left their strong mountain positions to pursue them into the open plains Once in the plains, Muhammad Ali's superior cavalry and artillery turned back and decimated the Saudi infantry Chroniclers noted that many Asiri and Saudi soldiers had tied their legs together with ropes, having sworn an oath not to flee. They were found slaughtered in their positions 5,000 Saudis were killed. Muhammad Ali celebrated by executing 300 prisoners at the gates of Mecca and Jeddah as a psychological deterrent

Following Bisl, the southern Saudi defensive line collapsed Tami bin Shu'ayb (Governor of Asir): Captured after a betrayal in Sabya. He was sent to Istanbul and executed Bakhroush bin Allas Defeated, the first Ottoman Army in Battle of the Stones but He was eventually captured and executed in a particularly brutal manner As Tosun Pasha advanced into the Najd heartland both sides became exhausted A truce was signed between

Abdullah bin Saud and Tosun Pasha The Ottomans would withdraw from Najd, and Saudi subjects would be allowed to perform Hajj safely

While the Saudi scholars Abdullah bin Bunyan and Abdulaziz bin Hamad visited Cairo and Al-Azhar to finalize the peace, Muhammad Ali was already planning a total invasion. He used the truce to rest his troops and gather intelligence on Diriyah's defenses This phase ended with a fragile peace that lasted only until Muhammad Ali felt ready to launch his final, most devastating campaign against the Saudi capital itself

The Third Campaign (1816–1818) was the final and most decisive phase of the war. Led by Ibrahim Pasha (the son of Muhammad Ali), this expedition was characterized by meticulous planning, the use of European military expertise, and a "scorched earth" approach to dismantling the Saudi defenses in Nejd Unlike previous attempts, Ibrahim Pasha's campaign was designed as a modern war of conquest The army was accompanied by French military advisors (including Colonel Vaissière, a veteran of Napoleon's army) and Italian doctors to manage logistics and health Superior Artillery: Heavy siege cannons and "bombs" (mortars) were brought in specifically to destroy the thick mud-brick walls of Najdi fortifications Psychological Warfare: Ibrahim Pasha used public displays of force and strict discipline to intimidate local tribes into switching allegiances before he even reached their territories

The Saudi plan, led by Imam Abdullah bin Saud, was to lure Ibrahim Pasha into the deep desert to cut his supply lines The Engagement: Saudi forces launched a surprise attack at Mawiyah, nearly overwhelming the Ottoman camp Ibrahim Pasha deployed his superior artillery, which caused panic among the Saudi ranks. The Saudi forces retreated to the heart of Nejd, leaving the gateway to the Qassim region open The siege of Al-Rass

became a symbol of Saudi resistance, lasting approximately 3.5 months. Every time the Ottoman cannons breached the walls during the day, the townspeople rebuilt them at night. Ottoman engineers dug tunnels to plant gunpowder under the town. The defenders counter-dug, discovered the tunnels, and set them on fire, causing a massive explosion within the Ottoman lines. Exhausted and low on supplies, the town eventually negotiated a peaceful surrender on the condition that their lives and property be spared.

With the resistance at Al-Rass neutralized, Ibrahim Pasha swept through the central regions. Unaizah was captured after the central citadel's gunpowder magazine exploded during a heavy bombardment. Buraidah and Al-Muznib: These towns surrendered to avoid total destruction. Ibrahim Pasha began taking "hostages" from prominent families to ensure the towns did not revolt behind his lines. Despite digging a deep defensive trench, the town was subjected to a brutal night-time bombardment (reportedly 300 cannon loads in one night) and eventually surrendered.

Dhurma was one of the strongest fortresses outside of the capital. Its fall was a major turning point. Fierce Fighting: The townspeople rejected all offers of surrender. Ibrahim Pasha unleashed a massive barrage (over 5,000 rounds in a single night). Ottoman troops bypassed the main defenders by entering through a different sector of the wall. Once inside, the troops carried out a horrific massacre in the streets and homes. The town was looted and left nearly deserted, sending a wave of terror throughout the region. By early 1818, the Ottoman forces reached the outskirts of the capital, Diriyah. The city was a formidable fortress. Diriyah consisted of several interconnected neighborhoods (At-Turaif, Al-Bujairi, Samhan, etc.), each with its own walls and towers.

Imam Abdullah bin Saud had reinforced the city with trenches and hundreds of cannons. He knew that the fall of one neighborhood did not mean the fall of the entire city, forcing the Ottomans into a grueling, house-to-house siege that would last for six months.

The Decline of the Saudis

From 1811 onward, the armies of Egypt—acting under the authority of the Ottoman Empire and commanded by Muhammad Ali Pasha—initiated a sustained series of anti-Wahhabi campaigns aimed at dismantling the power of the First Saudi State. These campaigns marked a decisive escalation in the long struggle between regional powers and the expanding Wahhabi-Saudi polity in Arabia.

Advancing into the Arabian Peninsula, Egyptian forces gradually extended their reach inland. The campaign reached its culmination under the leadership of Ibrahim Pasha, whose command brought a level of discipline, organization, and strategic coherence that had previously been absent among the Saudi state's adversaries. After years of methodical warfare, Ibrahim Pasha succeeded in defeating the Wahhabi forces and, in 1818, captured and destroyed their capital at Diriyah—a decisive act that effectively brought the First Saudi State to an end.

In the aftermath of this destruction, surviving Wahhabi fighters fled eastward, seeking refuge in peripheral regions of the Arabian Peninsula. A number of these fugitives made their way to Ras al-Khaimah, a coastal stronghold that had already gained prominence as a center of resistance and maritime activity. Their presence there alarmed regional rulers and foreign powers alike.

At this stage, Said bin Sultan, the ruler of Oman, proposed a joint military expedition with Ibrahim Pasha to attack Ras al-Khaimah and eliminate the remaining Wahhabi elements. This proposal reflected both the strategic importance of the region and the shared concerns of local rulers about Wahhabi resurgence. Interestingly, by 1819, a similar idea had also emerged among British authorities, who viewed Ras al-Khaimah as a threat to their maritime interests in the Gulf.

However, the plan never materialized. By the time a British envoy passed through Muscat to consult Ibrahim Pasha, Said bin Sultan had reconsidered his position. He ultimately advised the British to abandon the proposed expedition, demonstrating the shifting political calculations and

cautious diplomacy that characterized regional leadership during this period.

The Limits of Regional Resistance

Despite repeated and determined efforts by multiple powers, it became increasingly evident that no single regional force was capable of defeating the Wahhabi-Saudi state independently.

The campaigns launched by the Qajar Iran, though persistent, were hampered by logistical constraints and lacked the continuity necessary to secure lasting control over Arabian territories. Similarly, Ottoman authorities in Iraq struggled to contain Wahhabi incursions along their southern frontiers, revealing the limits of their military reach in desert environments.

Meanwhile, European powers such as United Kingdom and France maintained significant naval influence and engaged actively in diplomacy, yet deliberately avoided deep inland military commitments. Their strategic priorities lay elsewhere, particularly in securing maritime routes rather than becoming entangled in protracted desert warfare.

Omani resistance, whether conducted through tribal alliances or state-led initiatives, proved resilient but ultimately insufficient. While Omani forces were able to delay, disrupt, and harass Wahhabi advances, they lacked the capacity to strike decisively at the political and military core of the Saudi state.

The निर्णायक Egyptian Intervention

In the final analysis, the collapse of the First Saudi State was achieved only through the deployment of a large-scale Egyptian expeditionary force. This army differed fundamentally from earlier opponents: it was equipped with modern artillery, trained along more systematic lines, and supported by a centralized command structure.

Operating under Egyptian leadership, the campaign unfolded over nearly eight years and was characterized by a combination of siege warfare, scorched-earth tactics, and sustained territorial occupation. Rather than relying on isolated engagements, Ibrahim Pasha's forces pursued a strategy of gradual attrition, systematically weakening Saudi defenses and cutting off their resources.

The eventual destruction of Diriyah in 1818 was not merely a military victory but the culmination of this prolonged and methodical campaign. It demonstrated conclusively that only overwhelming manpower, superior weaponry, and sustained military pressure could bring about the collapse of Wahhabi rule.

Historical Significance

The Egyptian campaign stands as a turning point in Arabian history. It revealed the limitations of fragmented regional resistance and underscored the decisive impact of modernized military organization. At the same time, it did not eliminate Wahhabi influence entirely; rather, it forced its temporary suppression, setting the stage for its later revival.

The fall of Diriyah(1818)

The Siege of Diriyah (March September 1818) was the climactic final chapter of the Ottoman-Saudi War. For six months, the capital of the First Saudi State held out against a technologically superior force in a grueling struggle involving street-to-street fighting, scorched-earth tactics, and immense sacrifice Diriyah was not a single fortress but a complex of five

fortified neighborhoods built along the steep cliffs of Wadi Hanifa. Each district had its own walls, and a massive outer "Grand Wall" encircled the entire city. The city was nestled between two mountains, with dense palm groves providing cover for defenders. Imam Abdullah bin Saud had reinforced the walls and dug a deep defensive trench (Khandaq) shortly before Ibrahim Pasha's arrival.

The siege was not a static blockade but a series of violent clashes across multiple fronts. **The Battle of Al-Ulab:** Ibrahim Pasha personally scouted the high ground to place his cannons. Imam Abdullah responded with heavy fire from the cliffs, proving that Saudi positions were reinforced enough to resist direct cannonades. **The Night Raid at Ghubayra:** Ibrahim Pasha launched a surprise cavalry charge from the rear. While several Saudi leaders were killed, the main defensive lines held firm. **The Treachery at Samha:** Some locals defected to Ibrahim Pasha, revealing the city's weak points. This led to a breakthrough where Saudi commanders, including Ibrahim Pasha's brothers, were forced to withdraw from their forward trenches.

The Fire at the Munitions Depot: In mid-Ramadan, a massive explosion destroyed Ibrahim Pasha's primary gunpowder magazine. The Saudi forces capitalized on the chaos, launching a counter-attack that nearly forced the Ottomans to retreat until reinforcements arrived from Egypt.

After six months, Ibrahim Pasha received massive reinforcements of men and ammunition. He launched a coordinated general assault from all four directions.

The Breach at Mushayrifah: Ottoman cavalry seized the southern palm groves of Imam Saud the Great, which had been left temporarily unguarded. **The Fall of Samhan:** As the Ottomans broke through, the defense collapsed into chaotic street fighting. Imam Abdullah retreated to the At-Turaif palace, while other leaders held out in the Ghasiba fortress.

Scholars and civilians, including Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Abdel-Wahhab, fought desperately in the streets to push back the Ottoman troops, but the sheer weight of the artillery eventually leveled large sections of the city. Contemporary European historians, such as Felix Mangin, noted the extraordinary bravery of Saudi women during the siege. Under the scorching desert sun and intense gunfire, women moved through the front lines carrying water jars to hydrate the parched defenders, showing no fear of the Ottoman marksmen.

The Surrender and the End of the State Recognizing that further resistance would only lead to the total slaughter of the remaining women and children, Imam Abdullah bin Saud offered himself as a ransom. **The Agreement:** Abdullah surrendered on the condition that the city and its people be spared. **The Fate of the Imam:** He was sent to Cairo and eventually to Istanbul, where he was executed in December 1818.

- **The Cost of War:**
- **Ottoman Losses:** The Third Campaign alone cost the Ottoman forces over 12,000 men.
- **Saudi Losses:** The First Saudi State was formally dissolved, its capital razed, and many members of the House of Saud were exiled or imprisoned.

The siege remains a pivotal moment in the history of the Arabian Peninsula, representing a heroic but tragic defense against a global empire.

British Expedition Against the Qawasim (1818-1819)

In the closing phase of the wider conflict that had already seen the destruction of the First Saudi State at Diriyah in 1818, attention shifted from the Arabian interior to the maritime frontier of the Persian Gulf.

There, the powerful seafaring confederation of the Al Qasimi had long challenged British commercial and naval dominance. Their strongholds along the so-called “Pirate Coast” became the next target of imperial intervention. On 3 November 1819, the British launched a major punitive expedition, marking one of the most decisive naval-military operations in Gulf history. The expedition was commanded by Major-General William Keir Grant, who led a combined force of approximately 3,000 soldiers toward Ras Al Khaimah, the principal base of Qasimi power.

Before the expedition departed, the British sought to secure regional support. They extended a political offer to Said bin Sultan, the ruler of Muscat and Oman, proposing that he would be recognized as the sovereign authority over the Pirate Coast should he assist in the campaign. This was a calculated move, designed to align British naval objectives with Omani regional ambitions.

Said bin Sultan accepted the proposal and contributed a contingent of 600 men along with two ships. His participation underscored the increasingly collaborative yet pragmatic nature of Gulf politics, where local rulers balanced autonomy with strategic alliances.

The expedition itself represented a formidable display of British imperial military organization, combining naval and land power. The naval contingent included several Royal Navy vessels, notably HMS Liverpool (flagship), HMS Eden, HMS Curlew, and Captain Collier, commanding Liverpool, directed the naval operations. Supporting them was the East India Company’s Bombay Marine, which contributed six armed vessels: Teignmouth (16 guns, under Captain Hall), Benares (16 guns), Aurora (14 guns), Nautilus (14 guns), Ariel (12 guns), and Vestal (12 guns).

Additional reinforcements later arrived from Muscat, including two frigates and 600 men, further strengthening the expedition’s maritime dominance. On land, General Keir Grant commanded a diverse and disciplined army composed of The 47th and 65th Regiments of Foot. The

1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment of Native Infantry Flank companies from the 1st Battalion, 3rd Regiment of Native Infantry Marine Battalion detachments with Pioneer units and Omani first army In total, the expedition included 1,645 European soldiers and marines 1,424 Indian sepoys This composition reflected the hybrid structure of British imperial warfare in the region, combining European command with Indian manpower.

By 25–26 November 1819, the expeditionary force had assembled offshore near Ras Al Khaimah. The assault began in early December 2–3 December British troops landed south of the town without resistance The town came under bombardment from both land and sea Sustained artillery fire began, using 12-pounder guns and mortars. 7 December Two powerful 24-pound cannons from HMS Liverpool were added, intensifying the assault Captain Walpole of HMS Curlew was tasked with protecting the landing operation using gunboats and an armed pinnace. The lack of immediate resistance suggests either strategic withdrawal or inability of Qasimi forces to confront such overwhelming firepower directly.

The bombardment proved devastating. The town fell rapidly, with British casualties limited to only five men, while Qasimi losses were estimated between 400 and 1,000. This stark disparity highlighted the effectiveness of coordinated naval-artillery warfare

Following the collapse of Ras Al Khaimah, British forces turned their attention inland On 18 December, troops advanced through dense date plantations toward Dhayah Fort, a key defensive position. By 19 December, approximately 400 defenders had taken refuge inside the fort Conditions within Dhayah were dire No access to water No sanitation Minimal protection from the sun For three days, the defenders endured relentless bombardment from mortars and artillery. To break the stalemate, the British undertook a significant logistical effort: they transported two massive 24-pound cannons each weighing over two tons across roughly four miles of difficult terrain, including mangrove swamps After two hours of concentrated fire, the fort's walls were breached. On the morning of 22

December 1819, the remaining defenders surrendered. Only 177 were identified as actual combatants. Many were civilians, including herders and farmers from the Tunajj tribe. British losses during this phase were minimal: one officer and three soldiers killed, with sixteen wounded.

The fort was subsequently destroyed after briefly raising the British flag. Following these victories, British forces initiated a widespread campaign of destruction along the coast. Ras Al Khaimah was demolished and occupied by a garrison of 800 sepoy and artillery. Jazirat Al Hamra was found abandoned. Fortifications and fleets were destroyed in: Umm Al Quwain, Ajman, Sharjah, Dubai. Even vessels that had fled to Bahrain were not spared; ten ships were destroyed there. Additionally, the town of Lengeh, held by a Qasimi branch, was attacked and burned by Bombay Marine forces. Remarkably, the Royal Navy suffered no casualties during much of this phase, underscoring the overwhelming asymmetry of the conflict. With Qasimi resistance broken and local rulers either captured or compelled to submit, the British moved to formalize a new political order in the Gulf.

In 1820, under the authority of General Keir Grant, the General Treaty of Maritime Peace was signed. It began with the invocation

“In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate... Praise be to God, who hath ordained peace to be a blessing to his creatures.”

The treaty imposed several key conditions:

- Prohibition of piracy in the Persian Gulf
- Ban on slave trading at sea
- Mandatory registration of ships under British oversight
- Adoption of distinctive red-and-white flags (precursors to modern UAE flags)

Signatories included the rulers of:

- Abu Dhabi
- Ras Al Khaimah (including Rams and Dhayah)

- Dubai
- Sharjah
- Ajman
- Umm Al Quwain
- Jazirat Al Hamra

Despite the treaty, British distrust of Arab maritime activity persisted. In 1820, several Arab vessels were seized by Captain Loch, with some destroyed after failed compliance. Complaints even arose from Persian authorities in Fars, particularly regarding ships from Lengeh, whose inhabitants were considered Persian subjects. Nevertheless, the treaty marked a turning point. It inaugurated a period of relative maritime stability and laid the foundation for what would later become the Trucial States.

Over time, these coastal settlements once targets of bombardment and destruction would evolve into major commercial centers. Cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi would eventually rise to global prominence, their origins tied directly to the geopolitical transformations initiated by the 1819–1820 campaign.

Following the decisive fall of the Diriyah, the campaign to dismantle the First Saudi State expanded into a systematic pacification of the surrounding territories. Ibrahim Pasha, acting on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, directed his veteran Egyptian troops toward the eastern provinces, successfully conquering the strategic coastal regions of Qatif and el-Hasa. These conquests effectively severed the Wahhabi state's access to the Persian Gulf and its lucrative trade routes.

To ensure that the Saudi power structure could not easily reconstitute itself, Ibrahim Pasha initiated a scorched earth policy across the central plateau. Remnants of Wahhabi fortifications once the symbols of resistance and regional authority were methodically demolished across the Najd. This physical destruction was accompanied by a political purge: the Emir's immediate relatives, along with high-ranking Wahhabi religious

and military leaders, were taken captive and forcibly exiled to Egypt, effectively decapitating the movement's leadership.

By late 1819, the mission was largely deemed a success. Ibrahim Pasha departed for Cairo in December, but not before formally securing the Hejaz and its holy cities as integral provinces of the Ottoman Empire, re-establishing the Sultan's prestige as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Interestingly, this regional upheaval drew significant attention from Western powers. The British Empire viewed the destruction of Diriyah with calculated optimism; they believed the removal of the Wahhabi threat would stabilize maritime routes and further their burgeoning commercial and trade interests in the Gulf. This diplomatic interest was formalized when Captain George Forster Sadleir, a seasoned officer of the British Army in India, was dispatched from Bombay. Sadleir's mission was to traverse the Arabian Peninsula an unprecedented feat for a European at the time to consult with Ibrahim Pasha and coordinate British-Egyptian interests in the wake of the war.

Collapse and Restoration (1818–1824)

The period between 1818 and 1824 represents one of the most turbulent yet transformative eras in Arabian history, defined by the total disintegration of the First Saudi State and the resilient emergence of the

Second. This six-year window serves as a bridge between a devastating military defeat and a remarkable political "phoenix" moment.

Rebuilding the Saudi State (1818–1821)

After the fall of the First Saudi State, the first attempts to re-establish Saudi rule began. In 1235 AH / 1820 CE, Prince Mishari bin Saud attempted to restore Saudi authority in Diriyah after escaping captivity from the forces of Muhammad Ali Pasha. However, his effort lasted only a few months.

When Muhammad Ali Pasha in Egypt learned of Prince Mishari's attempts to reunify the state, he dispatched a force under the command of Abush Agha, which arrived in Unaizah. One of the local leaders, Muhammad bin Mishari Al Muammar, declared loyalty to Muhammad Ali Pasha and seized Mishari bin Saud, handing him over to the Egyptian forces. Mishari later died in prison. This event angered Prince Turki bin Abdullah Al Saud, who was then the ruler of Riyadh. In response, he decided to confront Muhammad bin Mishari Al Muammar for capturing his cousin Mishari bin Saud. Prince Turki set out from Al-Ha'ir to Dirma, gathering supporters along the way, and then advanced toward Diriyah. He captured Muhammad bin Mishari Al Muammar and his son Mishari bin Muhammad, and executed them in retaliation for the death of his cousin.

In the period following the fall of the Saudi State, instability prevailed. Security collapsed, tribal conflicts re-emerged, and society experienced widespread disorder and economic decline due to the absence of a central authority capable of maintaining stability. However, in the same year, Prince Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Saud successfully led the effort to establish the Second Saudi State, making Riyadh its capital. The new state followed the same foundations and principles as the First Saudi State.

Rule of the Second Saudi State then passed from Imam Turki bin Abdullah Al Saud to his son Imam Faisal bin Turki, and later to Faisal's sons, Imam Abdullah and Imam Abdulrahman.

The Rebellion (1821–1824)

Ibn Muammar ruled much of Najd under Ottoman sovereignty until the emergence of Mishari bin Saud Al Saud, the brother of Abdullah bin Saud. After escaping captivity near Yanbu, Mishari hid in Al-Washm, gathered supporters loyal to Al Saud from Al-Qassim and Al-Zulfi, and marched on Diriyah. Although Ibn Muammar initially pledged allegiance, he later reconsidered and mobilized forces in Sadus with the support of leaders

from Huraymila. With additional backing from the Mutayr tribal leader Faisal bin Watban Al-Duwaish, Ibn Muammar seized Diriyah and imprisoned Mishari bin Saud in Sadus. After capturing Mishari, Ibn Muammar advanced toward Riyadh, where Turki bin Abdullah had taken refuge. Turki fled to Al-Ha'ir in southern Najd, prompting Ibn Muammar to appoint his son Mishari as governor of Riyadh. Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali Pasha sent a force of 400 men under the command of Boush Agha to capture Mishari. Upon learning of Turki bin Abdullah's presence in Dirma, Ibn Muammar sent his son with 100 soldiers, but Turki defeated them and took them captive. Turki then seized Diriyah and Riyadh, arrested Ibn Muammar, and upon confirming Mishari's death in captivity, executed both Ibn Muammar and his son.

Faisal bin Watban Al-Duwaish and Ghaboush Agha attempted to besiege Imam Turki bin Abdullah in Riyadh. Turki's forces successfully resisted, forcing the siege to be abandoned.

In response, Muhammad Ali Pasha ordered all Ottoman forces in Medina to march to Riyadh under the command of Hussein Bey. The Ottoman column reached Riyadh without opposition and besieged Turki in the royal palace. Under the cover of night, Turki and his supporters escaped to Al-Hulwah in southern Najd. The remaining defenders surrendered, and Hussein Bey executed seventy supporters of Turki and captured Umar bin Abdulaziz along with his son Abdulmalik.

After the withdrawal of Hussein Bey, the Sharif of Medina, Hassan Pasha, sent a cavalry force of 800 men under Hassan Bey (Abu Dhahir). This force devastated Unaizah, Jabal Shammar, Al-Majma'ah, and Sudair, while attempts to collect zakat from the Bedouin provoked widespread opposition throughout Najd. Months later, Ottoman forces from Riyadh and Manfuha, led by Ibrahim Kashif (brother of Musa Kashif), along with local rulers Nasir bin Nasir Al-Ayidhi (Amir of Riyadh and Al-Kharj) and Musa bin Mazru' (Amir of Manfuha), attacked the Subay' tribe at Al-Bada'i south of Riyadh. The Subay', led by Sheikh Muhammad bin Dughaym

Al-Subay'i, defeated the Ottoman forces, killing more than 300 soldiers, including Ibrahim Kashif and Nasir Al-Ayidhi, while Musa bin Mazru' fled

The Ottoman garrison in Al-Majma'ah, led by Musa Kashif, attacked the nearby Suhool tribe but was defeated, losing more than thirty soldiers, including Kashif himself. The survivors retreated to Al-Majma'ah along with the Amir of Unaizah, Abdullah Al-Jami'i. The people of Unaizah revolted against the Ottoman garrison of 600 soldiers led by Muhammad Agha, protesting oppressive taxation and misconduct. After besieging the forces in Al-Safa Palace and killing around seventy soldiers, a peace agreement allowed the Ottomans to withdraw, leaving only the Riyadh garrison in Najd.

During Ramadan of 1823, Turki bin Abdullah returned with thirty men and gained support from leaders in Al-Mahmal, Al-Jiljalah, and Sudair. He established Irqah as his base. His attack on the Ottoman garrisons of 600 soldiers in Riyadh and Manfuha failed, forcing him to withdraw to Irqah, where he repelled an عثماني counterattack.

In late 1823, Turki advanced from Irqah to capture Dirma and killed its ruler. As conflict spread across Najd, Turki defeated opposing leaders, including Majid bin Ahmad of Al-Majma'ah and Hamad bin Mubarak of Huraymila. The rulers of Al-Zulfi, Al-Ghat, Sudair, and Shaqra surrendered without resistance. Manfuha also surrendered after negotiations with Prince Ibrahim bin Salamah, who expelled the Ottoman garrison and joined the forces of Riyadh.

While the Ottoman Empire was preoccupied with the Greek War of Independence, Turki expanded his authority through campaigns in Al-Kharj, Al-Qassim, and Jabal Shammar. By 1828, all of Najd recognized his rule. After his son Faisal escaped Egyptian captivity, Turki sent him against the Emirate of Bani Khalid. In the Battle of Al-Sabiyah, Faisal's forces composed of Qahtan, Ajman, and Subay' tribes defeated the forces of Majid bin Urair, who was allied with the Anizah and Mutayr tribes. Majid's death accelerated the Saudi conquest of Al-Ahsa and Qatif.

The Saudi Conquest of Al-Hasa (1830)

The campaign to reconquer Al-Hasa in 1830 began with what appeared to be a localized clash between Majid bin Ar'ir of the Banu Khalid confederation and warriors of the Subay' tribe. What initially seemed to be a minor tribal dispute soon escalated into a broader conflict that drew the attention of Imam Turki bin Abdullah, founder of the Second Saudi State. At the time, Imam Turki was engaged in consolidating his authority across Najd. He therefore dispatched his son, Faisal bin Turki, to lead the campaign, while calling upon allied tribes to support the expedition. Among the forces that joined Faisal were prominent tribal leaders and contingents, including Mutlaq al-Masakh, Fuhayd al-Sayfi, Dhuwayhi al-'Umani of Subay', Dhuwayhi bin Khuzaym bin Lahyan of Suhool, Muhammad bin Qarmala of Qahtan, and Sultan bin Quwayd of Al-Dawasir.

Faisal advanced into the region and executed a decisive maneuver by positioning his forces between the army of Majid bin Ar'ir and the spring of Fidat Ma'qila, a known water source near Hazwa. This strategic placement deprived the Banu Khalid forces of access to water, placing them under severe logistical pressure. Fighting continued for several days, characterized by cavalry engagements, rapid charges, and alternating advances and withdrawals.

On the first day of Ramadan, Majid bin Ar'ir was killed in battle, a development that spread quickly through his ranks and weakened the morale of the Banu Khalid forces. Upon receiving news of the ongoing conflict, Imam Turki personally set out during the last ten days of Ramadan to join his son and oversee the final phase of the campaign. The battle intensified as tribal warriors and individual champions clashed across the field. Among the notable casualties was Mutlaq al-Masakh of Subay'. On the opposing side, Faghran bin Ar'ir, a commander of the Banu

Khalid forces, was killed after being struck down by Tāhūs al-‘Udhaybi of Subay‘

The decisive moment came on the morning of the 27th of Ramadan, 1245 AH (March 1830 CE), when the Banu Khalid army collapsed and fled in defeat. Muhammad bin Ar‘ir, who assumed leadership after the death of Majid, retreated with the remnants of his forces to Al-Hasa. Imam Turki advanced shortly afterward and granted him safe conduct in exchange for his surrender, thereby bringing Al-Hasa formally under the authority of the Second Saudi State.

The battle took its name from the location in which it occurred, known as Al-Sabiyah, a sandy area east of Al-Dahna and near Al-Samman, referenced in classical Arabic poetry. The defeat marked the effective end of the rule of the Al Humayd of Banu Khalid, who had dominated eastern Arabia since 1080 AH. As a result of this victory, Najd, Al-Hasa, and parts of the Arabian Gulf coast came under Saudi control. Following the withdrawal of Banu Khalid toward Al-Hasa, the Subay‘ tribe took possession of their former territories, establishing a presence around Riyadh.

In 1831, two armies of the Al-Muntafiq confederation advanced toward Al-Hasa in an attempt to restore Banu Khalid authority and expel the Saudi forces. These armies were defeated by Faisal bin Turki, including the death of Salih Pasha al-Muntafiqi, who commanded one of the forces near Al-Ahmadi. Along the northern approaches, Saudi forces engaged in repeated clashes with Al-Muntafiq detachments. These encounters were generally limited in scale, consisting of raids, counter-raids, and brief engagements along the desert routes linking southern Iraq with Al-Hasa. Despite occasional losses on both sides, none of these clashes resulted in a decisive breakthrough, and Saudi control over the inland trade routes remained largely intact.

During this period, British involvement in the Persian Gulf increased due to concerns over Saudi influence on maritime trade and regional alliances. In one notable incident, British naval forces bombarded Al-Jubail, targeting installations associated with Saudi authority. Although the attack caused material damage and demonstrated naval superiority, it did not produce any lasting strategic effect inland

Meanwhile, Egyptian-Ottoman forces attempted to renew pressure through an inland campaign. This effort culminated in a confrontation at Al-Hawiyah, where Saudi forces inflicted a clear defeat on the advancing army, disrupting their formations and forcing their withdrawal. The engagement reflected a broader pattern in which conventional forces struggled to sustain operations deep within Arabia against a highly mobile and adaptive opponent. Despite these challenges, Saudi trade networks continued to operate across the Persian Gulf and into the Indian Ocean. Supported by tribal alliances and internal security, these routes allowed the state to maintain economic resilience and strategic depth

Egyptian–Wahhabi Border Clashes (1833–1836)

Following the consolidation of Najd and the reconquest of Al-Hasa, the Second Saudi State faced continued pressure along its western and southern borders, particularly from Egyptian forces stationed in the Hijaz under the command of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Between 1833 and 1836, a series of border clashes unfolded, marking a critical period in which the Saudis sought to defend their territory while projecting authority along the Najd-Hijaz frontier

The Saudis initially achieved a series of significant victories against the Egyptians. Notably, at Afif and Al-Dawadmi, Saudi forces decisively defeated Egyptian detachments, demonstrating both their tactical skill

and intimate knowledge of the desert terrain. These victories emboldened the Saudis to take the offensive, conducting raids across the border into Egyptian-held Hijaz territories. One such raid was led by Abdullah bin Saad Al-Otaibi to Turabah. This operation succeeded in its objectives, striking Egyptian outposts and disrupting supply lines. The success of this raid highlighted the effectiveness of Saudi mobile cavalry and their ability to exploit intelligence gathered from local tribes along the border. A second raid led by Abdullah bin Saad Al-Otaibi, however, met with stiffer resistance. Near Al-Khurmah, Egyptian forces repelled the Saudi advance, inflicting casualties and forcing a retreat. Despite the setback, these engagements underscored the persistence and resilience of Saudi border operations

In 1835, Saudi forces successfully ambushed two Egyptian patrols in Bishah, resulting in the death of Yusuf Pasha al-Iskandarani, a senior Egyptian commander. This decisive strike demonstrated the growing skill of Saudi raiding parties in applying asymmetric warfare tactics against conventional Ottoman-Egyptian forces. Abdullah bin Saad Al-Otaibi, alongside Fahd bin Mohammed Al-Shammari, led a broader tribal campaign against the Egyptian positions in Ranyah within Hijaz. This campaign initially succeeded, reflecting the strategic advantage of combining tribal alliances with disciplined Saudi cavalry operations

However, the conflict was not uniformly favorable for the Saudis. In one engagement, Egyptian forces under Salim Bey al-Turki and Hassan Pasha managed to defeat the Saudis, resulting in the death of Saad bin Ibrahim Al-Sudairi. These oscillating outcomes illustrated the precarious balance of power along the Najd-Hijaz frontier. Each Saudi expedition, while strategically necessary, gradually depleted the manpower and resources of the state. Despite these challenges, the Saudis succeeded in maintaining the integrity of their Najd-Hijaz border and preventing Egyptian forces from establishing permanent footholds deep into Najd.

The border clashes of 1833–1836 reflected a larger pattern of resistance against Egyptian encroachment. While the Saudis demonstrated tactical

ingenuity, the repeated mobilization of forces strained the resources of the Second Saudi State. Nevertheless, these engagements allowed the Saudis to secure key trade routes, assert authority over tribal allies, and maintain Najd as a stable base of power. By combining swift cavalry maneuvers, local intelligence, and tribal coalitions, the Saudis were able to resist external pressure while preparing for future challenges along both internal and external frontiers

In sum, the Egyptian–Wahhabi border clashes were a defining period in the Second Saudi State. They showcased both the capabilities and vulnerabilities of the state, highlighting the delicate balance between defensive resilience and the strain of continual military mobilization. Despite losses in individual encounters, the Saudis emerged with their territory largely intact, securing Najd and the strategic corridors leading to Hijaz, and reinforcing the authority of Imam Turki bin Abdullah and his son, Faisal bin Turki, across the region.

The Egyptian Expedition to Najd (1836–1843)

Faisal inherited a state that was territorially restored but politically vulnerable. In 1836, he decisively refused to pay tribute to the Ottoman authorities in the Hijaz, breaking with his father's policy of cautious accommodation. This act of defiance triggered an Ottoman–Egyptian response, setting the stage for a renewed invasion of Najd. Anticipating conflict, Faisal attempted to delay Ottoman action through diplomacy and subterfuge. He dispatched his brother to Mecca, bearing gifts, expressions of submission, and offers of camels for transport, while simultaneously providing covert assistance to his allies in 'Asir. Despite these efforts, Egyptian forces under Muhammad Ali Pasha advanced, determined to crush Saudi autonomy

In 1836, Egyptian troops landed at Yanbu and moved inland, accompanied by Khalid ibn Saud, a rival claimant intended to replace Faisal. Upon learning of the size and strength of the invading army, Faisal mobilized his forces to resist. However, as word spread of the approaching

Ottoman-Egyptian columns, many tribal levies deserted. Fear of the disciplined Egyptian troops undermined morale, and even the inhabitants of Riyadh refused to mount effective resistance

Faced with collapse, Faisal withdrew from Riyadh with a small contingent of loyal followers. In 1837, Khalid ibn Saud entered Riyadh under Egyptian protection, assuming temporary control. Muhammad Ali briefly allowed a compromise, dividing authority between Faisal and Khalid, but this arrangement was short-lived. In 1838, Egyptian forces under Khurshid Pasha launched a decisive campaign against Faisal, defeating his forces and ending organized resistance. Faisal was captured and sent to Cairo, marking the first successful direct occupation of Najd, Al-Hasa, and Qatif by Egyptian forces. Egyptian authority was extended further through the submission of Bahrain, Qatar, Trucial Oman, and the cooperation of Kuwait

Despite this occupation, Egyptian control proved unsustainable. European pressure, particularly British diplomatic intervention, forced Muhammad Ali to withdraw most of his forces from Najd and eastern Arabia by April 1840. Two significant defeats, at Al-Halwa and Dilam, and the death of Egyptian commander Ismail Bey al-Masri at the hands of Wahhabi loyal tribes, further undermined Egyptian authority. By the end of 1841, Egyptian control in central Arabia had collapsed, leaving political fragmentation and weakened local administrations

In 1843, Faisal escaped captivity in Cairo and returned to Arabia. Moving quickly, he eliminated his rival Ibn Thunayan and reestablished himself as ruler, inaugurating his second reign over the Saudi state. This time, Faisal adopted a pragmatic approach toward imperial authority. He formally acknowledged the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan and agreed to pay an annual tribute in exchange for official recognition of his authority. The Ottomans, in turn, recognized Faisal as ruler of Najd, granting him a title that implied supremacy over Arabia, restoring Saudi rule and stability

One of the earliest challenges of this period occurred in northern Najd, where Saudi forces clashed with Kuwaiti contingents along the fringes of

Al-Qaryat. These engagements, primarily over control of trade routes, resulted in a decisive Saudi victory that forced the Kuwaiti forces to withdraw and discouraged further intervention in central Arabian affairs. At the same time, Faisal consolidated Saudi control over Al-Qassim, a strategically and economically vital region due to its fertile lands and location along caravan routes linking Najd to Iraq and the Hijaz. By the mid-1840s, Al-Qassim had become one of the strongest pillars of the revived Saudi state, providing both manpower and economic stability.

Even after the reassertion of Saudi authority, Egyptian forces still operating nominally under Ottoman command launched punitive raids to curb Wahhabi influence and prevent the reemergence of Saudi power near the holy cities. While the Saudis occasionally suffered defeats at the hands of these better-equipped troops, these encounters primarily highlighted the resilience of the Saudi tribal system and the challenges faced by conventional armies attempting to operate deep within Arabia

The Second Saudi State: Expansion and Conflict (1824–1865)

Following the successful liberation of Riyadh, the period between 1824 and 1865 stands as the golden era of the Second Saudi State (the Emirate of Nejd). This half-century was defined by a delicate dance between

aggressive territorial expansion and the constant threat of internal dynastic strife and external intervention.

The System of Government in the Second Saudi State

Arabia The government of the Second Saudi State closely resembled that of the First Saudi State, both rooted in the principles of the Salafi reformist call. The state was governed according to Islamic law, with the Qur'an and Sunnah serving as its constitution. Decisions were guided by the consensus of the four Sunni Imams, and all policies adhered to Islamic

principles, emphasizing justice, consultation (shura), and adherence to tradition.

The ruler of the state held the title Imam, serving as both the religious and political leader. The Imam was the supreme authority, overseeing all aspects of governance, including legislation, military command, and judicial matters. The seat of power was located in Riyadh, where the Imam convened his council (Diwan) to discuss state affairs with his advisors.

The Imam was the apex of the political hierarchy, holding absolute authority while also serving as the highest religious leader. The Imam's responsibilities included preserving the religion, enforcing Islamic law (hudud), and defending the state by constructing forts, strongholds, and defensive lines along the frontiers. The position of Imam was not a new institution; it traced its origins back to the era of the Rashidun Caliphs. In the Second Saudi State, the Imam often personally led the army in wars, except in cases of illness or other exceptional circumstances. From his residence in Riyadh, the Imam managed the affairs of state, issuing decrees and overseeing administrative, judicial, and military matters. The office of the Crown Prince in the Second Saudi State was hereditary. For example, Imam Turki bin Abdullah appointed his son Faisal bin Turki as heir, who later passed the position to his son Abdullah. The Crown Prince acted as a deputy for the Imam during absences, whether due to military campaigns, illness, or other circumstances. He oversaw the administration of the state in the Imam's stead and frequently led the army, gaining practical experience in governance that prepared him for future rule. The role was therefore both administrative and military, ensuring continuity of leadership. The Imam appointed Emirs to govern the various regions of the state, choosing local leaders with influence and authority over their territories. Each Emir served as the Imam's representative in the province, overseeing administration, finances, and local security. Emirs were responsible for collecting zakat (alms), raising troops when summoned for campaigns, and often leading military expeditions in their regions. Their authority was crucial for maintaining order and extending the Imam's influence across Najd and surrounding areas. Consequently, the office of

the Emir was one of the most important in the administrative structure of the Second Saudi State. This system reflected a combination of religious legitimacy, central authority, and delegated regional power, allowing the Second Saudi State to maintain both political cohesion and effective military control despite the challenges of tribal politics and external threats.

Conflict in Wadi Al-Dawasir (1845)

The conflict arose after tensions between the Saudi central authority and segments of the Al-Dawasir tribe escalated into open confrontation. The tribe had resisted Saudi oversight, particularly regarding taxation, zakat collection, and conscription for military campaigns, which they perceived as infringements on their autonomy. In response, Imam Faisal decided to assert the authority of the state by sending a military expedition to Wadi Al-Dawasir, led by one of his trusted commanders.

The campaign involved both diplomatic efforts and military operations. Initially, emissaries were sent to the tribal leaders, demanding compliance with the Imam's orders and reminding them of their obligations to the state. When negotiations failed, Saudi forces advanced into the valley, meeting resistance from the Al-Dawasir warriors who utilized their knowledge of the desert terrain and the natural defenses of the wadi.

Skirmishes erupted across key points in the valley, with hit-and-run attacks, ambushes, and cavalry engagements dominating the conflict. Despite initial resistance, the Saudi forces, leveraging superior numbers and coordination, gradually gained the upper hand. The decisive moment came when the Saudi army successfully secured key strongholds and routes within the wadi, forcing the Al-Dawasir to submit. The subjugation of Wadi Al-Dawasir secured the southern approaches to Riyadh, ensuring safer passage for caravans and communication between central Najd and the southern tribes.

The 1845 conflict in Wadi Al-Dawasir exemplifies the delicate balance the Second Saudi State had to maintain between tribal autonomy and centralized control. While military action was sometimes necessary, it was combined with negotiation and strategic patience, ensuring that the tribe remained within the fold of the state rather than permanently opposing it. This pattern of engagement became a defining feature of Faisal bin Turki's governance, allowing him to consolidate Najd while maintaining relative stability in the tribal peripheries

The Ajman Tribe Problem

During the reign of Imam Faisal bin Turki, the central authority faced challenges from several tribal groups resisting state control. One notable issue involved the Ajman tribe, whose repeated incursions along trade routes and attacks on pilgrims' caravans posed a direct threat to the security and prestige of the state. These actions were viewed as a serious challenge to the authority of the Imam, prompting him to take measures to assert central control and maintain the stability of Najd. The Ajman tribe posed a significant challenge to the state's security, primarily due to their disruptions of trade and pilgrimage routes. The tribe attacked Hajj caravans, and by 1276 AH, they escalated their defiance by raiding the Imam's own camels. Imam Faisal sent his son, Prince Abdullah bin Faisal, to punish the tribe. He handed them a decisive defeat at the Battle of Jahra.

Seeking to recover, the Ajman allied with the Al-Muntafiq tribe. Prince Abdullah was again tasked with ending the threat. In a famous engagement known as the Battle of Al-Tab'ah, the Saudi forces crushed the alliance, solidifying Abdullah's reputation as a formidable military commander.

Faisal bin Turki and the Bahrain Conflict (1847–1851)

Imam Faisal bin Turki increasingly directed his attention toward the Persian Gulf, a region marked by political fragmentation, dynastic rivalries,

and the growing influence of European powers especially the British the French and American influence in the Persian Gulf These conditions presented both opportunity and constraint. In 1847, Faisal sought to exploit divisions within Bahrain, aiming to bring the island under Saudi influence without provoking direct confrontation with regional powers such as Omani empire and Abu Dhabi. This initial attempt, however, failed to secure full control of the island

Despite this setback, Faisal achieved a partial success by compelling the Bahraini ruler to accept a peace arrangement that included the payment of tribute. Yet his inability to press further was shaped by multiple pressures. Simultaneous threats in Al-Qassim, where rival claimants such as Muhammad bin Awn and Khalid bin Saud launched attacks and even secured victories, diverted Saudi attention and resources. At the same time, British opposition to any expansion in the Gulf imposed firm limits on Faisal's ambitions. Britain, determined to protect its commercial and strategic interests, closely monitored developments and openly supported the Bahraini leadership.

Undeterred, Faisal renewed his efforts in 1851, launching what became his most serious attempt to dominate Bahrain. In May of that year, Saudi forces advanced toward Al-Bidda in Qatar, intending to use it as a forward base for a future invasion. This movement alarmed Bahrain's leadership. Ali bin Khalifa, acting in Qatar, mobilized local defenses and urgently sought assistance from Saeed bin Tahnun Al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi

At the same time, Faisal pursued a calculated diplomatic strategy. He sought to isolate Bahrain by securing alliances with regional leaders, including the rulers of Sharjah and Dubai, while ensuring the loyalty of surrounding tribes. He also attempted to frame his campaign as a legitimate internal dispute within the Bahraini ruling family, hoping to reduce the likelihood of British intervention However, these efforts met strong resistance. Qatari tribes aligned against the Saudi advance, supporting Ali bin Khalifa with men, weapons, and ships. Together, they attempted to disrupt Saudi operations by blockading Qatif, targeting

Faisal's logistical base. By mid-May 1851, reports indicated that Saudi forces were nearing Al-Bidda, prompting defensive withdrawals and urgent calls for reinforcements

Fighting broke out in early June 1851 and continued for several days. Although accounts differ in detail, the conflict ultimately weakened the anti-Saudi coalition. In the aftermath, local leadership in Qatar shifted toward accommodation with Faisal, allowing him to consolidate influence over the region. Nevertheless, Bahrain remained defiant. In response, the Bahraini ruler organized a naval blockade and appealed directly to the British for protection. Initially hesitant, British authorities soon recognized the broader implications of Saudi expansion. Concerned that Wahhabi control of Qatar could destabilize the Gulf and potentially open the door to Ottoman influence, Britain intervened decisively. Warships were dispatched to protect Manama harbor, and Faisal was formally warned against launching any naval assault on Bahrain

A series of naval confrontations followed, resulting in heavy losses among Faisal's allies. The death of key supporters forced the Saudi leadership to reconsider its strategy. Recognizing the growing risk of escalation, Faisal shifted toward negotiation. Diplomatic efforts, initially unsuccessful, eventually gained momentum through mediation led by Saeed bin Tahnun of Abu Dhabi, acting with the backing of regional rulers. By July 1851, a settlement was reached. Under its terms, Bahrain agreed to pay an annual tribute to Faisal, while Faisal in turn agreed to withdraw from Qatar, restore Al-Bidda, and refrain from further interference in Bahraini affairs

The agreement brought a temporary end to the conflict. Faisal withdrew to Al-Ahsa, Bahrain lifted its blockade of Qatif, and British naval forces gradually disengaged. Although peace was restored, the conflict revealed the limits of Saudi expansion in the Gulf. British intervention had decisively shaped the outcome, demonstrating that while the Second Saudi State could exert influence over inland Arabia, its ambitions along the coast would remain constrained by the strategic interests of European powers

The Bahrain conflict thus stands as a defining episode in Faisal bin Turki's reign illustrating both his determination to expand Saudi authority and the geopolitical realities that ultimately restricted it

Faisal ibn Turki's Campaign Against the Omani Empire (1851-1853)

the Omani Empire was entering a period of internal strain. Although the formal division of the empire would only occur after the death of Said bin Sultan in 1856, signs of fragmentation were already evident. Rivalries within the ruling elite, combined with persistent tensions between the coastal authorities in Muscat and the tribal populations of the interior, weakened the state's ability to defend its frontier regions. These conditions created a strategic opportunity that Imam Faisal ibn Turki was prepared to exploit

Faisal's objectives extended beyond simple territorial expansion. His campaign aimed to project Wahhabi religious authority into the Ibadi-dominated regions of Oman while simultaneously establishing political leverage over the interior and undermining Muscat's already fragile control. In 1851, he launched a major expedition, assembling a force of experienced Najdi fighters reinforced by allied tribal contingents from Al-Buraimi, Al-Duru, and the Na'im. This coalition reflected Faisal's broader strategy combining ideological motivation with pragmatic tribal alliances

The campaign began with a focused advance toward the Al-Buraimi oasis, a long-contested and highly strategic frontier zone. Control of Al-Buraimi meant access to the interior routes of Oman and influence over key tribal networks. Saudi forces entered the oasis and engaged Omani-aligned contingents, gradually asserting dominance through a combination of military pressure, negotiation, and the support of local tribes sympathetic to their cause. With Al-Buraimi secured as a forward base, Saudi detachments began pushing deeper into Omani territory.

One of the earliest major engagements occurred near Ibri, where Omani forces attempted to block the Najdi advance. The Saudi-tribal coalition achieved a decisive victory, opening the path into the interior and exposing the weakness of Muscat's overstretched defenses. The rapid pace of the Saudi advance disrupted Omani coordination, forcing their forces into a reactive posture

As the campaign progressed, Faisal's lieutenants led mobile columns across the interior, targeting key towns and strongholds. Regions around Ibri, Rustaq, and Nakhal became centers of repeated clashes. These engagements were often intense but localized, with Saudi forces relying on speed, mobility, and superior knowledge of tribal dynamics rather than prolonged sieges. Omani resistance, though determined, suffered from fragmentation and the inability to coordinate effectively across distant regions.

The decisive phase of the campaign came in 1853, when Faisal moved to secure permanent control over Al-Buraimi. Saudi forces expelled the remaining Omani loyalists and established a Wahhabi garrison in the oasis, transforming it into a stronghold of Najdi authority. This marked the height of Saudi influence in the region and symbolized Faisal's success in extending his reach deep into Oman's interior. Despite these achievements, the campaign did not result in complete domination. Faisal neither attempted nor possessed the means to capture Muscat, whose coastal position, maritime strength, and external connections placed it beyond Saudi reach. Coastal Oman remained firmly under Omani control, limiting the extent of Saudi expansion

Nevertheless, the campaign was a significant strategic success. It secured Saudi dominance over large portions of the Omani interior for several years, strengthened alliances with key tribal groups, and demonstrated the ability of the Second Saudi State to project power far beyond Najd. At the same time, it highlighted the enduring limits of that power particularly when confronted by coastal strongholds and external influences that lay outside the reach of desert-based forces

The First War of Unaizah (1854)

The friction began in Sha'ban 1270 AH when the people of Unaizah took a defiant stand against central authority. They expelled Jalwi bin Turki, the Governor of Qassim appointed by Riyadh, from his seat of power in the city. Imam Faisal bin Turki viewed this expulsion as an act of open rebellion and "manifest disobedience" (isyan) that necessitated a military response to restore the state's prestige. War broke out in Muharram 1271 AH. For nine months, the city remained in a state of confrontation with the central government

Peace was eventually brokered through the mediation of the Sharif of Mecca, Muhammad bin Awn. This intervention highlighted the complex inter-regional diplomacy of the era, ending the first direct military clash between Unaizah and Riyadh

Civil War and Decline (1861–1891)

The period between 1861 and 1891 marks the tragic unraveling of the Second Saudi State. What began as a powerful regional emirate under Faisal bin Turki descended into a fractured landscape of brother against brother, ultimately allowing the House of Rashid from Ha'il to seize control of Central Arabia

The Second War of Unaizah (1861 / 1278 AH)

The second conflict was sparked by a specific bloody incident involving the leadership of neighboring Buraidah Abdulaziz al-Abu Olayan (the deposed Emir of Buraidah) fled toward Unaizah and then toward Mecca with a small escort, including men from Unaizah

Abdullah bin Faisal sent a detachment led by his brother, Muhammad bin Faisal, who intercepted the group in the Nafud al-Shaqiqa dunes, killing seven men When news of the killings reached Unaizah, the townsmen

immediately pursued Muhammad's force and engaged them in battle. This direct attack on a member of the ruling Al Saud family effectively signaled the start of a full-scale war. As the conflict expanded, Unaizah shifted from a defensive posture to an offensive one. In response, Imam Faisal declared a state of war across all provinces of the state. Riyadh sent reinforcements from the Al-Washm and Sudair regions, followed by a massive force led again by Muhammad bin Faisal.

The two sides met in the Battle of the Valley (Wadi Unaizah). The forces of Unaizah suffered a defeat and were forced to retreat and fortify themselves within the city walls.

The climax of these years of friction occurred in mid-Jumada al-Thani 1279 AH. The people of Unaizah launched a massive sortie against the camp of Muhammad bin Faisal. Initially, Unaizah's forces gained the upper hand, reaching the heart of the Saudi camp and causing heavy casualties. However, a sudden and heavy rainstorm broke out. The heavy rain soaked the gunpowder, rendering the matchlock rifles (*bunduq*) of the Unaizah defenders useless.

Seizing the advantage, the Saudi cavalry, relying on swords rather than firearms, launched a counter-charge. The forces of Unaizah were driven back into their city, leading to a grueling, long-term siege. Exhausted by the siege, both sides sought a resolution. Zamil al-Sulaim, the prominent leader of Unaizah, met with Abdullah bin Faisal. A peace treaty was signed in early 1280 AH under the following terms:

The besieging central forces would withdraw. Unaizah would provide a symbolic tribute of food and weapons to the camp of Abdullah bin Faisal.

This gesture served as a formal declaration of loyalty and obedience to the central government in Riyadh, temporarily stabilizing the Al-Qassim region.

Raids on Abu Dhabi (1850s–1860s)

Tensions between the Second Saudi State and Abu Dhabi emerged from a combination of strategic rivalry and competing influence over the tribal interior of eastern Arabia. One of the earliest triggers came during the rule of Sheikh Saeed bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan (1845–1855), when he ordered the construction of a fortified position designed to protect the Al Ain oases and secure the vital route linking Al Ain with Abu Dhabi and the western regions of Al Dhafra and Liwa

This defensive and logistical project alarmed the Saudi leadership in Najd, who viewed it as a direct challenge to their authority over inland routes and tribal allegiances. In response, Saudi forces moved to assert their presence by occupying a key water source in the Al Dhafra region, aiming to disrupt Abu Dhabi's communications and extend their influence. However, Abu Dhabi reacted swiftly. Forces of the Bani Yas confederation, led by Sheikh Saeed, confronted the Saudi detachment at Al-Anka, defeating it and forcing a retreat.

Although this early clash did not escalate immediately largely due to Imam Faisal bin Turki's preoccupation with his campaigns in Oman it set the stage for a broader conflict. By the early 1860s, hostilities resumed with greater intensity. Saudi raiding parties began targeting Abu Dhabi's inland territories, testing its defenses and attempting to reassert Najdi authority.

One of the key operations occurred at Al-Khatim, where Saudi forces, acting under Faisal's orders, defeated local defenders and secured a tactical victory. This success was followed by further advances into Al-Wathba, increasing pressure on Abu Dhabi's interior strongholds.

The response from Abu Dhabi was decisive. Under the leadership of Zayed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, later one of the most prominent rulers of the emirate, Abu Dhabi forces launched a counterattack on a Saudi outpost at Shawwalah, successfully destroying it and restoring their defensive position.

The conflict soon expanded into a wider pattern of raids and counter-raids. Saudi-aligned forces pushed westward toward Mirfa and

coastal settlements along the Dhafra region, demonstrating their ability to project power deep into the hinterland. These operations often involved the destruction of resources and the seizure of livestock, reflecting the harsh realities of desert warfare.

By 1862, the campaign intensified further as Faisal dispatched reinforcements under his sons and trusted commanders. Engagements spread across the region, including clashes near Al-Hamriyah, where Saudi-allied forces overwhelmed local opponents. These raids underscored both the effectiveness of Saudi mobility and the vulnerability of coastal and settled communities beyond immediate external protection.

British officials in the Gulf closely monitored these developments, frequently describing them as “Wahhabi incursions” into the Trucial States. While the Royal Navy maintained control at sea, British authorities found it difficult to counter Saudi movements across the desert interior. As a result, British forces were deployed along the coast to reinforce their allies and deter further escalation.

By 1863, Saudi raids extended northward into regions such as Ajman and Umm Al-Quwain, but these operations proved less successful. Increased coordination among the coastal rulers, combined with the growing British military presence, imposed new constraints on Saudi expansion.

Recognizing the risks of direct confrontation with British power, Faisal eventually ordered a halt to large-scale operations. This decision marked the effective end of sustained Saudi offensives against Abu Dhabi and the Trucial Coast.

Although tensions did not disappear entirely, the conflict gradually subsided. By the mid-1860s, a combination of British influence and Saudi strategic recalculation brought this مرحلة of confrontation to a close. The raids on Abu Dhabi ultimately revealed both the reach and the limitations of Saudi power dominant across the desert interior, yet increasingly constrained along the Gulf coast by emerging international forces

The Saudi Civil War (1865–1875)

The decade between 1865 and 1875 is the most critical turning point in the history of the Second Saudi State. It marks the transition from a unified regional power to a fractured emirate, consumed by a fraternal civil war that opened the door for foreign intervention and the eventual rise of the Al Rashid. Upon the death of Imam Faisal bin Turki in 1865, his eldest son, Abdullah bin Faisal, took the throne with an established track record of military leadership. However, his reign remained stable for only a year before his brother, Saud bin Faisal, challenged his authority.

Saud initially sought support from the Emir of Asir, Muhammad bin Ayed, who instead tried to mediate peace between the brothers. Even the leading religious scholars of Riyadh, including Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hassan, failed to convince Saud to abandon his rebellion. The conflict quickly moved from diplomacy to the battlefield, spanning the entire breadth of the peninsula. Saud's first attempt to march on Riyadh ended in defeat, forcing him to flee to the Al-Murrah tribes in the Al-Ahsa desert and eventually to Buraimi.

While in exile, Saud secured vital material support from the sheikhs of the Oman Coast and Bahrain, allowing him to regroup and threaten the eastern province of Al-Ahsa. **Battle of Al-Juda (1287 AH):** This was a catastrophic defeat for Imam Abdullah's central government. His brother and commander, Muhammad bin Faisal, was captured, and his army was routed. This victory gave Saud control over the wealthy Al-Ahsa region and its resources. The momentum shifted entirely to Saud, who occupied Riyadh, forcing Abdullah to flee. Finding no support in Al-Qassim or Ha'il, Imam Abdullah made the fateful decision to seek help from Midhat Pasha, the Ottoman Governor of Baghdad.

Ottoman Invasion of Al-Hasa (1871)

In March 1871, facing a losing battle against his brother Saud who had seized control of the Eastern Province, Imam Abdullah sent his envoy, Abdul Aziz bin Suwailem, to Baghdad. He sought the help of the ambitious

Ottoman Governor, Midhat Pasha. To the Ottomans, this was the "golden opportunity" they had awaited to re-establish a direct presence in the Arabian Peninsula. The campaign, which launched from Basra in April 1871, was a sophisticated combined arms operation involving land and sea forces.

Led by Lieutenant General Naser Pasha, the force consisted of five infantry columns, cavalry, and artillery. They were bolstered by 1,000 volunteer horsemen from the Al-Muntafiq tribe and various Iraqi tribal levies from Az Zubayr.

A critical component was the Kuwaiti fleet. Sheikh Abdullah II Al-Sabah, the ruler of Kuwait, personally led approximately 80 ships to support the Ottoman advance. The coordination between the land and sea forces allowed for a rapid takeover of the coast. The naval fleet arrived, timing their landing with the arrival of the marching infantry capturing Ras Tanura. The Ottoman forces then arrived at Qatif. After "fierce battles" with the supporters of Saud bin Faisal, the Ottoman-led forces captured the strategic port. Following the victory at Qatif, the campaign moved swiftly to occupy Dammam and finally the regional capital of Hofuf.

Once the military objective was achieved, the political reality shifted drastically against Imam Abdullah bin Faisal. Midhat Pasha ignored his promises to restore the land to Abdullah. Instead of acting as an ally, the Ottoman Empire acted as a conqueror.

The Najd Sanjak Al-Ahsa was formally severed from the Saudi state and annexed into the Ottoman Empire as the Najd Sanjak (administrative district). This stripped the House of Saud of its primary source of tax revenue and its only access to the sea. For his indispensable naval support, Sheikh Abdullah II Al-Sabah was granted the Ottoman title of Kaymakam (District Governor), formalizing a closer relationship between Kuwait and the Sublime Porte.

This expedition transformed the Saudi Civil War from a domestic dispute into a geopolitical event. By losing Al-Ahsa, the Second Saudi State was

reduced to a landlocked entity in the heart of the Najd, making it vulnerable to the rising power of the Al Rashid in the north, who did not have to contend with the Ottoman-occupied east

The civil war technically wound down after the death of Saud bin Faisal in 1291 AH (1874). In a bid to stop the bloodshed, the younger brother, Abdulrahman bin Faisal, abdicated his claim in 1293 AH (1876) in favor of the eldest, Abdullah. Though Abdullah was back on the throne, his authority was a shadow of its former self, restricted mostly to Riyadh and its immediate surroundings.

As the House of Saud weakened, Muhammad bin Abdullah Al Rashid, the Emir of Jabal Shammar, grew in strength. His ambitions were no longer limited to Ha'il; he now looked toward Riyadh with the intent of ending the Second Saudi State entirely. This civil war essentially "bled" the state dry of its resources and unity. Would you like to look closer at the specific terms of the Ottoman intervention?

The Fall of the Second Saudi State (1891)

After the death of the great leader Imam Faisal bin Turki, his sons Abdullah and Saud entered a bitter civil war for the throne. This internal bleeding allowed Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Rashid, the ambitious ruler of Ha'il, to intervene. Exploiting the chaos, Ibn Rashid defeated Imam Abdullah bin Faisal Umm al-Asafir (1884). This battle signaled the beginning of the end,

as Rashidi influence spread across Nejd, reducing the Saudi Imams to mere regional governors under Ha'il's shadow

This was the most catastrophic battle for the people of Nejd and the allies of the House of Saud. The forces of Al-Qassim (led by the emirs of Buraidah and Unaizah) and their tribal allies (Utaybah and Mutayr) initially pushed back Ibn Rashid. Muhammad bin Rashid utilized a classic desert feint. He pretended to retreat, drawing the Qassim forces out of their defensive positions into the open plains.

Once in the open at Mulayda, Ibn Rashid's cavalry turned and decimated the defenders. Between 1,000 and 3,000 men from Qassim were killed, including the Emir of Unaizah. It was a day of mourning that defined Nejd for a generation. Following Mulayda, Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal (the father of King Abdulaziz) realized his position in Riyadh was untenable.

To protect his family, Abdul Rahman gathered his belongings and moved toward the desert between Al-Ahsa and Yabrin, seeking refuge among the Ajman and Al-Murrah tribes. Recognizing that the harsh desert was no place for children, he sent his young son, Abdulaziz, and the rest of his family to Bahrain, where they were welcomed by Sheikh Isa bin Khalifa.

Imam Abdul Rahman made one final, desperate attempt to reclaim his capital. He managed to capture Al-Dilam and re-enter Riyadh briefly in 1309 AH (1891). Muhammad bin Rashid marched quickly from Ha'il. The two armies met at Huraymila, north of Riyadh. The Saudi forces were defeated, and the Imam's hopes for a military comeback were shattered. With the defeat at Huraymila, the Second Saudi State formally ceased to exist. Central Arabia was now under the total control of the Rashidi Emirate.

The fall of the state led to the famous decade of exile in Kuwait, which set the stage for the young Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman (Ibn Saud) to return in 1902 and begin the unification of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi history captures the core of their narrative: a movement centered on sovereignty, internal reform, and cultural restoration. The Saudi states

represented a departure from centuries of fragmented tribal rule, aiming to unify the Arabian Peninsula under a centralized administration reminiscent of the early Arab caliphates

From the mid-eighteenth century, the emergence of the Saudi state in central Arabia marked a profound transformation in the political and religious landscape of the peninsula. Centered in Diriyah, the alliance between the House of Saud and the reform movement associated with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab created a state that was both ideologically driven and militarily expansionist. Throughout its early history, the Saudi state confronted multiple external forces

The movement also framed itself as a return to what it viewed as the original principles of Islam, drawing ideological inspiration from the early Islamic eras, including the time of the Umayyad Caliphate and Abbasid Caliphate though its interpretation was distinct and often contested by other المسلمين.

Beyond warfare, the Saudi state invested in internal consolidation. Under its rule:

- **Religious institutions** were strengthened, with an emphasis on doctrinal reform and enforcement
- **Settlements and towns** were expanded, particularly in Najd
- **Fortifications**—including forts and defensive structures—were constructed to secure key المناطق
- **Trade routes** across the Arabian Peninsula were protected and, in some regions, revitalized
- **Education**, primarily religious, was encouraged through scholars and local teaching circles

While it would be an overstatement to say that Arabia uniformly “thrived” in a modern economic sense, there is evidence that certain مناطق under Saudi control experienced increased stability compared to earlier periods of fragmentation. The Saudi state successfully resisted and challenged multiple regional powers

Copyright © Tarik Firro, 2018.

Published in the Sussex Academic e-Library, 2018. SUSSEX ACADEMIC
PRESS

PO Box 139, Eastbourne BN24 9BP, UK

Distributed worldwide by Independent Publishers Group (IPG) 814 N.
Franklin Street Chicago, IL 60610, USA

ISBN 9781845199340 (Cloth) ISBN 9781782845782 (EPub) ISBN
9781782845799 (Kindle) ISBN 9781782845522 (Pdf)

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This e-book text has been prepared for electronic viewing. Some features, including tables and figures, might not display as in the print version, due to electronic conversion limitations and/or copyright strictures.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wynbrandt, James

A brief history of Saudi Arabia / James Wynbrandt; foreword by Fawaz A. Gerges.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8160-5203-4 (hc. alk.paper)

1. Saudi Arabia. [1. Saudi Arabia—History.] I. Title.

DS204.25.W96 2004 953.8—dc22

Facts On File books are available at special discounts when purchased in bulk quantities for businesses, associations, institutions, or sales promotions. Please call our Special Sales Department in New York at (212) 967-8800 or (800) 322-8755.

You can find Facts On File on the World Wide Web at
<http://www.factsonfile.com>

Cover design by Semadar Megged Maps and charts by Dale Williams

Printed in the United States of America MP Hermitage 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
This book is printed on acid-free paper.